1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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*423 173 427 596 As the circumstances of land acquisition would indicate, these early holdings were not excessively 'fragmented' but the seeds of later more complex patterns had been set by the lease of non-contiguous properties and the parcellation amongst themselves or with unrelated co-tenants of large tenements newly leased. However, we must remember that, although the male line of the family held no land before c. 1860, this is certainly not true of all the families into which O's sons and their descendants married. Accordingly, 2's children and the children of later marriages were only partially descended from the landless strain. With the legal right of equality of division of all heritable property [428] regardless of sex, the expectations of later scions would therefore be enhanced. It must also be remembered that all land held by the later descendants of O, whether acquired by descent through the family, by marriage, new tenancy or purchase, may with equal validity be considered as the land of other families, whose sons and daughters marry into the family which we have chosen to study. It is a valid case of 'gaining a son, not losing a daughter'. In the present (fourth) ● [621] generation the family is fully integrated into a complex web of relationships within the village. Indeed an informant has remarked that if someone in the village is not related to him, that person must be a stranger and newcomer to the area.

Notwithstanding these considerations, clarity can only be preserved by maintaining the idea of the family as a developing entity in terms of which land is gained, lost or divided. Division is the normal process by which lands may pass in effect into the hands of a single child, though siblings may be entitled to some form of compensation. Division to all the children need not take place at the same time; an elder child may even receive its share while a younger brother is still unborn. In these circumstances, 'shares' cannot be precise, though efforts may be made to re-adjust at a later stage. A share of parental land is normally the first which a young farmer begins to work as his own. If, as is usual, his departure from the family farm was occasioned by marriage, he may also obtain land from his father-in-law, but this is never *his* in the same sense and is only effectively consolidated with the land of his own family when his children, born of that wife, come to work it on their own behalf.

Generation 3

All the brothers of the second generation are now dead, the last having died c. 1936, and their landholdings split up. The pattern of acquisition of land by the third generation is shown in Fig. 139. Family land passed very unevenly to these groups. For example, in group C, although there were seven other children all land came ultimately to the husband of one daughter (3 to 35). Initially the farm was divided amongst the children.

Table 43. Holdings of Generation III: Group C. *Tmien.*

s = son; d = daughter.

	31s	32s	33s	34d	35/36d	37d	38d	Total
Division from parent: 3	¼	¼	¼	¼	45½	¼	¼	49½
Transfers among siblings	-¼	-¼	-¼	-¼	+4	-¼	-¼	4
Total land and max. holding	¼	¼	¼	¼	49½	¼	¼	-
Total land to be passed on	-	-	-	-	49½	-	-	49½
Leasehold	-	-	-	-	49½	-	-	49½

Note: Some of 35's siblings have a little land elsewhere.

In other groups, the demands of each child were more nearly equal, but in none was there a rigid egalitarian sub-division. Even in group B, where all the children received some land, its distribution seems to have been controlled by

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Preface

This study was carried out and written shortly before Malta became an independent nation. Its purpose is to present a descriptive analysis of Maltese village politics. In many respects these are quite unusual, for in Malta, which has been administered as a fortress for the last four centuries, there are no village headmen, mayors or councillors to serve as links between their villages and the central government. But in spite of the highly centralized administration certain activities in the villages do play a part in the decision of both local and national issues, though at first sight they may not seem to be closely connected with politics as this is usually conceived. These are political activities, for as Prof. Lucy Mair has observed, politics is concerned with the ways persons and groups compete to influence the outcome of disputes and community decisions in accordance with their own interests.[1] The central problem can thus be divided into three major parts: first, to explore the relations between competing persons and groups; second, to examine the nature of the issues which concern them and the community; and third, to trace the channels through which they bring influence to bear on those who make the decisions.

After a brief sketch of Malta in time and space, I examine successively the articulation of the State, the Church and the political parties with the villages, the ties of neighbourhood and family, the social composition of the villages, and the basis of leadership. Against this background I show how issues which originate within the Church, and in particular over the cult of saints, affect village social organization. I then look at the effects of disputes arising out of issues of national policy. Finally, I examine the channels of influence open to the villagers.

Throughout this study I have been exclusively concerned with describing and analysing the political life of the villages of Malta and Gozo. But it has occasionally been necessary for me to make brief excursions into the field of national politics, for because of Malta's smallness, national political disputes swiftly become issues

[1] Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government* (London, Penguin Books, 1962), p. 10.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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the clergy to charge for their services. Finally, he decreed that no foreign power, even the Pope, might interfere in local religious administration.

By these acts, the French attacked values that were at the very foundation of the Maltese social structure. Moreover, the new government aggravated the discontent by its failure to meet its financial commitments. Less than two months later, the suppressed hostility flared into savage revolt when the authorities tried to auction off the property of the Carmelite church in Mdina. The citizens rose, massacred the town's garrison and burned their bodies. Then, led by Notary Vitale and Canon Caruana, a powerful cotton merchant who later became Bishop, they penned up the main French force under General Vaubois behind the fortifications of Valletta and the Three Cities. Two years later the French surrendered to the British force which had come to assist the Maltese.

Under British rule, Malta changed from a theocracy ruled by a religious order, to a self-governing colony with an active internal political life. Administrative posts gradually passed to Maltese hands, and today the civil service, apart from a few foreign experts, is completely Maltese. But in spite of a long flirtation with various forms of local and regional government, there are still no village mayors or councillors. The new civic committee in Gozo is an exception which will be discussed in the following chapter. Early in their rule, the British abolished the Università. To appease the wounded dignity of the nobles, they divided Malta into six districts under the nominal authority of Lords Lieutenant, chosen from the nobility. These officers were in charge of civil affairs, and presided over district courts. Each was assisted by syndics, deputies with magisterial powers, who lived in the villages. In 1839, this system of local government was abandoned as inefficient and costly, and district magistrates, also called syndics, were appointed from the class of advocates. Later, the government established district consultative committees to advise it on local needs and to coordinate health measures during epidemics. These committees were only partly successful, and were also abandoned. In 1896 the government finally abolished the office of syndic, and, in the interest of economy, closed the last district courts in 1913. After that, except for the Magistrate's Court in Gozo, the administration of justice remained centralized in Valletta.

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CHAPTER II

The National Organizations: State, Church and Political Party

Generally speaking, the activities of government are carried out by a number of departments and boards, each of which is under the control of a director or chairman. Each of these, in turn, is usually responsible to an elected Cabinet Minister. But under the interim constitutional arrangements which followed the resignation from office of the Labour Party in 1958, Department Heads were responsible to a British Chief Secretary and his assistants. Under each Department Head are ranked the various grades of civil servants. These run from the Executive and Clerical Officers through non-pensionable clerk-typists, fatiguemen and industrial labourers. Altogether, some 17,000 persons work for the government. They represent 19 per cent of the total labour force. This makes the Malta Government the largest employer on the islands. Entrance to all but the lowest grades, and promotion between the principal grades within the civil service, are by means of open competitive examinations.

Malta's small size has facilitated the centralized administration required of an island fortress. As already observed, there are no councillors, headmen or mayors, either elected or hereditary, to represent the interests of the villagers to the government or convey the wishes and commands of government to the people. Virtually all the machinery and personnel of government are located in Valletta. Only the police represent government authority in all villages. There are government elementary schools for boys and girls in all villages and almost all hamlets. Now most villages also have a dispensary which is open for a few hours a day under the supervision of a government District Medical Officer and a nurse. There are a few regional post offices and branches of the Department of Emigration, Welfare and Labour. All other public services, such as street sanitation, sewerage (where it exists), water, electricity, repair of roads and so on, which in

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the latter's diocese fails to appoint one within eight days; and the right to wear the insignia of his office which mark his superior dignity (the *pallium* and the double cross), throughout his province. Moreover, the Archbishop's court functions as a court of appeal for cases heard in the court of the Bishop of Gozo. In all other matters, however, the Bishop of Gozo has the same rights as the Archbishop. These include the right to make certain rules and dispensations for his diocese, to inflict penalties, interdictions and excommunication; and to determine who may be admitted to the priesthood.[1]

Each Bishop is assisted by a number of advisers, who also run the Curia, or administrative headquarters of the diocese. In the Archdiocese of Malta the Curia is under the charge of the Vicar General, who has the title of Titular Bishop. These advisers are for the most part Monsignori, or Canons, of the Cathedral Chapter. The Cathedral Chapter is composed of the priests attached to a cathedral church who advise the Bishop, arrange for a more solemn celebration of divine worship, and, when the See is vacant, provide for the government of the diocese. Though the Archdiocese of Malta has both a Cathedral in Mdina, and a Co-Cathedral in Valletta, there is only one Chapter.

In addition to the Cathedral Chapters in Malta and Gozo, there are also a number of Collegiate churches. The clergy of a Collegiate Church form a Collegiate Chapter, and have the title of Canons. They perform no special duties in the diocese. The title of 'Collegiate' is an honour which can only be bestowed upon a church with Papal sanction. There are Collegiate Chapters in Senglea, Vittoriosa, Cospicua, Rabat, Birkirkara and Valletta in Malta, and in Gharb, Nadur and Xaghra in Gozo.

The Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo are divided into 48 and 15 parishes respectively. A parish is the basic social and territorial unit of the Church. Every village in Malta and Gozo is a separate parish, though some towns are divided into two or more parishes. The limits of a parish are fixed by the Bishop. They often extend several miles beyond the compact villages that are so characteristic of the Maltese countryside. In most rural parishes there are also a few scattered farmsteads. The occupants of these isolated farms normally have houses in the village, to which they

[1] Cf. William E. Addis and others, 'Archbishop', *A Catholic Dictionary* (16th ed. rev.; London, Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1960), pp. 44 f.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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621 794 795 move for religious feasts and family celebrations. Sometimes a number of these farms are clustered around a chapel or small church dependent upon the parish church. In time, these hamlets may disappear; historical sources cite many which have long since vanished.[1] On the other hand, a hamlet may grow to the point where its inhabitants can afford to build a larger church and in other ways successfully press their claim to become a separate parish. Most rural parishes in Malta and Gozo have come into being in this way. Some towns have been divided into two or more parishes for administrative reasons. In Malta, Qormi and Valletta are each divided into two parishes, and Sliema into three. [578] Rabat in Gozo is currently being divided into two parishes. But because of fierce rivalry between the residents of the territories concerned, the exact boundary line is disputed and the territorial division will probably take another generation to complete.

632 794 795

79 The parish priest, who in all but the smallest parishes is assisted by a curate or more, is responsible to the Church for the care of [609] the souls of all Catholics resident in his parish. Except where foreign service personnel live with their families – notably in Rabat, Naxxar, Mosta, St. Paul's Bay, Luqa and Birżebbuġa – all villagers are Catholic, and are thus the priest's parishioners. These parishioners also form part of the corporate body of the Church.

793 The clergy in Malta, as in all other Catholic countries, are divided into two main groups: the secular or diocesan clergy, and the regular clergy. Diocesan priests are trained in the Bishop's Seminary and are directly subject to the authority of the Bishop. A further distinction is made between those diocesan priests whose families or patrons have been able to provide them with a benefice – either property or cash deposited at the Curia bank – yielding a minimum of £10 annually, and those who have received their benefices from their Bishop. After the first five years the former, who are by far the most numerous, are free to serve where they wish. The latter always remain at the service of their Bishop. Most parishes are run by diocesan priests, and the clergy [792] resident in the villages belong to this group. The friars and monks of the regular clergy are members of religious orders. They have been trained in the seminaries and houses of their particular orders.

[1] An interesting study of villages which have disappeared is given in M. Richardson, *Aspects of the Demography of Modern Malta* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1960), pp. 243 ff.

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occupations, 52 per cent are service personnel and skilled workers, 27 per cent are unskilled and semi-skilled labourers and 14 per cent are engaged in agriculture. Just over two-thirds of the total are employed outside the village. The majority of these, as in Farrug, work in the Grand Harbour industrial area. Those who work in the village are for the most part self-employed. They are farmers, shopkeepers, blacksmiths and carpenters.

In Table No. 1 I have compared the various occupational classes in Kortin and Farrug to each other and to the national figures.

III

Most villages look very much alike. Their magnificent baroque churches provide a startling contrast to the low, flat-roofed houses grouped tightly around them. As the parish church towers over the village, so it dominates it socially, for the church is in every sense the centre around which the life of the village revolves. In front of the church there is usually a large square, the *misrah* or *pjazza*, which is the social centre of the village. Various village clubs and lay societies, as well as the police station, are situated on the *pjazza*, or just off it, as are the principal wine shops, the government dispensary and the finest houses of the village. As the square is usually the terminal point of the local bus line, it is the point at which most people enter and leave the village. It is also the stage on which the principal events of village life take place: the annual feast, or *festa*, of the patron saint, the many religious processions and the occasional political rallies. On Sundays, and especially during the long summer evenings, the square teems with groups of men, who sit about on steps and benches, talking and arguing for hours on end. During weekday mornings, it belongs to the old men of the village, now freed by government old age pensions from the backbreaking toil in the fields that was the lot of their forefathers.

Each village is first and foremost a community of neighbours. Even the smallest of them have distinct residential groups, the members of which are in closer contact with each other than with people living in other parts of the village. This is, of course, particularly true of the larger villages. But even in Farrug, a village of about 1,400, the extremities of the village and the various streets and alleys form separate neighbourhoods. The many little shops

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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438 The many little shops
443 scattered about the village permit the women to do most of their
512 shopping near their own homes. Because of the long, hot summers
621 when food spoils quickly, they shop separately for each meal.
[251] Their shopping trips begin on the way home from the early Mass,
[796] at about 4.30 or 5 o'clock in the morning, and continue until 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening. Thus, during the course of a day, a woman may make as many as a dozen trips to the shops as well as to the hawkers who pass through the neighbourhood. These trips are social occasions during which she comes in contact with friends and neighbours from all parts of the village, and in the process hears the village news.

278 The men are out of the village from 6 o'clock or so in the
512 morning to about ~~2~~ o'clock in the afternoon in the summer, and
517 in the winter from about 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock
621 in the evening. But summer or winter, in the late afternoon and the early evening the men gather in the clubs, wine shops and cafés. Besides the clubs and important cafés in the square, which draw men from all over the village, there are many small neighbourhood wine shops. Most have a regular clientele of friends and neighbours who spend hours together talking, playing cards and drinking tea, soft drinks or wine. Many cafés also have television. Thus, though most inhabitants of a village are in fairly frequent contact with each other, the gossip groups of the women and the wine shops of the men form local social centres which help bind neighbours more closely to one another. These neighbourhoods develop a certain group loyalty.

621 It often happens that some of the neighbourhoods in a town or
794 village are centred on small chapels. In times gone by there used
796 to be a certain amount of good-natured competition between the youngsters of these districts over the festas of the patron saints of their respective chapels. But, except on rare occasions, this rivalry never threatened the unity of the village during the annual festa of the patron saint of the parish. Frequent removals from house to house within the village have usually helped to prevent the development of disruptive sectional loyalties.

621 Since each village is also a separate parish it is not possible to
[771] consider a village entirely as a secular community. Religion per-
[794] meates the structure of Maltese society to an extent that makes it quite impossible to classify many institutions as either religious or secular. As a secular community, a village has no official leader, it

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owns no land or other property in common and its inhabitants are rarely called upon or choose to work for a common end. At the same time, villagers are conscious of belonging to a distinct social entity which is distinguished from other villages by a collective nickname and a common sub-culture.

Many villages have a dialect quite distinct from that of their neighbours, which the inhabitants, even those who have learned to speak 'correctly' (*bil-pulit*), normally use to each other; although they will invariably address strangers in their school Maltese. There are also a number of minor variations of certain customs between villages or districts. These may include the way church bells are rung to announce a death or the way some aspects of the festas are organized. Finally, each village has its own very private body of gossip, stories, scandals and jokes, which makes up a part of its history and tradition that is not shared with outsiders.

As a congregation and a religious corporation, the village *qua* parish owns land and other property, including the parish church. It also has an appointed leader in the parish priest. The inhabitants of the village meet regularly for worship, to take part in religious processions and to carry out other devotional activities. Furthermore, they act together to celebrate the annual festa of the patron saint, who symbolizes the unity of the secular and religious aspects of the village, for he is patron of both village and parish.

A village can also be regarded as a moral community. That is, people who live there must conform to a certain code of conduct. While the community cannot enforce this code with the type of formal sanctions the police and the Church use to punish infractions of secular and religious laws, public opinion can, and does, exert great pressure for conformity. A person who flouts the canons of convention becomes the object of malicious gossip and, depending on the nature of the offence, he may also become the target of overt hostile action and have his house front splashed with paint, or his front door burned. The only way to escape from the sanctions of public opinion is to move to one of the urban areas or the expanding new suburbs, where licence can be relatively anonymous.

Members of a village thus share a common body of custom and tradition; they also display an intense loyalty to their place of birth. This sense of loyalty is strongest during the annual festa of

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the village, which draws in native sons and daughters from all over the country, and often from as far away as Canada and Australia. This loyalty is also evident at other times. Villagers like to think of themselves as a united body, and they take care to protect the appearance of unity before strangers. This is an attitude of which anyone studying the social history of a village becomes keenly aware. Strangers are thus treated with great reserve. The inhabitants of the smaller villages are well known for their reluctance to give any information about their neighbours to strangers. Inquiring visitors are often referred to the parish priest, who, as village spokesman, screens them and, if possible, deals with their questions. The reserve of a village *vis-à-vis* a stranger is considerably more than just an expression of village loyalty. Present also is the very real fear of vengeance should the answer to a stranger's question lead to some unpleasantness for a neighbour. Social relations in a small village are to a very considerable extent governed by the proverb 'Don't make an enemy of your neighbour' (*Taghmilx ghadu lil ġarek*).

In view of this loyalty, it is not surprising that people express their solidarity with their native village by opposition to other villages. A village's traditional rivals are usually those with which it has the most frequent contact. I was almost invariably warned by villagers that the inhabitants of the neighbouring village were a treacherous and savage lot. There are many tales of hostility between neighbouring villages, especially over the celebration of the annual festa, which I dare say have lost nothing in retelling. I was told a number of stories of how youths stampeded goats through their rivals' festa processions, and of expeditions which stole fireworks, attacked street decorations and performed other daring escapades. Although most of these adventures are said to have taken place many years ago, they are no more unusual than some of the incidents that I witnessed.

If the intense inter-village rivalry of former times has abated somewhat, it is probably because increased education and contact outside the villages have helped to break down ignorance and isolation. But this rivalry still lies dormant, and may flare up at the slightest provocation from a traditional rival; I have seen a number of fights over trivial incidents during festas and football matches. The number of police at village feasts and the quantity and density of the barbed-wire entanglements at the Schreiber

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Stadium, where most village football matches are played, are in themselves evidence that fights during these occasions are the rule rather than the exception.

Although there is little formal contact between villages, there is a considerable amount of informal coming and going between their inhabitants. Most inter-village marriages are between partners from neighbouring villages, and the network of kin ties that these form helps to bind the villages of a district together. Inhabitants of neighbouring villages travel to and from work on the same buses, and see each other often at the annual feasts of the district. These multiple relations contribute to a certain district spirit. The most striking example is the unity of the Gozitans, although people from the south of Malta have something of the same spirit of belonging to a particular district. Nonetheless, the knowledge the inhabitants of the southern Maltese villages have of each other cannot be compared to that of the Gozitans, who, for the most part, not only recognize each other by face, name and nickname, but usually know a surprising (and often uncomfortable) amount of personal details about one another.

IV

A person becomes a member of a village by being born there, or marrying or moving into it. The administrative details connected with these acts are quite simple. Parents must register the birth of a child at the local police station, and the parish priest enters the child's name in his register when the baby is baptized, which usually takes place within a few days of its birth. If a man marries into a village, his name will be entered in the parish register, for under Church law the marriage must be performed by the parish priest of the bride, or his delegate. If the couple settles in the husband's village or in a strange village, their names will be recorded on the annual census there, the *status animarum*, which every parish priest prepares for his bishop. All changes of address are supposed to be given (but often are not) to the Rationing Office and, if the person is over twenty-one, to the Electoral Office. No other civil authorities are interested in a person's whereabouts.

In point of fact, however, most people live in the villages into which they were born. This is another respect in which the towns

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differ from the villages. While only about sixteen per cent of the adult population of an average Maltese village is not native born, approximately two-thirds of the adults residing in the urban and suburban areas were born outside the communities in which they now live (see Table 2 below).

There is no rule of village endogamy or exogamy, and a bride and groom are free to choose where they wish to live and set up their household. The choice of residence is normally governed by available housing, place of work and the relative strength of the bride's and groom's ties with their respective families and villages. But in case of a conflict of interest, a wife is expected to follow the wishes of her husband. If housing is available in both the village of the wife and that of her husband, and the husband's place of work is in neither, there is a tendency for the couple to live in the wife's village. The Maltese themselves acknowledge that, all other things being equal, the ties between a wife and her family are stronger than those between her husband and his kin.

Thus in Farrug and Kortin, I found that approximately half the couples had married and settled within their respective villages. Less than one in twenty (4 per cent) of the couples were strangers who had moved there because of the shortage of housing in their own villages; and all of these had relatives already living in the two villages. The outsiders who married or moved into Farrug and Kortin formed one-fifth (21 per cent) of the adult population, or about 10 per cent of the total population of each. In slightly over half (56 per cent) the marriages between people from these two villages and other villages, the husband settled in his wife's village. This is the general trend in Malta, where most men work outside their villages. In Gozo, where farming is the chief occupation, it is more usual for a woman to move to her husband's village, for that is his place of work. People from the towns who marry villagers are reluctant to move into the villages, and it is therefore fairly common to find villagers, especially women, moving to join their spouses in the towns.

The general principles regarding marriage residence are reflected in Table 2.

The number of outsiders resident in a village is an important factor governing the degree to which its inhabitants consider themselves a corporate group. As outsiders always retain strong links with their place of birth, the solidarity of a village is inversely

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proportional to the number of outsiders resident in it. Not only does loyalty to friends and relations in a man's village of birth often take precedence over new ties established by his marriage into a strange village, but it is not unusual for a man married into another village to continue to play an active part in the social life of his native village. Conversely, an outsider is seldom called upon or attempts to join the clubs and associations of his wife's village. Thus, only 3 per cent of the committee members of the fifteen band and social clubs in the sample villages I studied were outsiders, although about 18 per cent of the adult male population resident in these villages were born elsewhere. On the other hand, 5 per cent of the committee members were now living outside the villages in which they were born and hold office.

TABLE 2. Adults Born Outside their Place of Residence[1]

Place of Residence	*Percentage born elsewhere*	*Males*	*Females*
Urban/Suburban	66%	45%	55%
Maltese Villages	16	52	48
Gozitan Villages	15	39	61

Because of the many ties which bind people to their villages of birth, an adult who moves into his wife's village remains an outsider for many years. The village will probably not give him a distinctive village nickname, and he will be known simply as the husband of his wife, or perhaps by the name of his native village. Although the village may ignore his outside origin for much of the time, his place of birth is certain to be remembered and held against him by his enemies, should be become involved in a dispute. The children of an outsider, however, become full members of the village by virtue of their birth there, and their connection with the community through the family of their mother (or father). By the time his children begin to grow up and get married, the outsider is usually firmly established as a full member of the community.

[1] This table was compiled from data made available to me by the Principal Government Electoral Officer. It covers a random sample drawn from a sample of two suburban communities (Sliema and Balzan), seven Maltese villages (Zebbuġ, Għargħur, Gudja, Mosta, Qrendi, Dingli and Żurrieq) and three Gozitan villages (Qala, Xagħra and Għarb).

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persons with political or economic influence. Once a kin relationship is made known, it establishes a special tie between the two parties, and preferential treatment often follows; for kin are expected to help each other.

The ties of kinship can also be extended artificially by asking non-kin to become godparents or marriage witnesses. Although parents normally choose persons to fill these offices from among their parents, uncles and aunts, thus reinforcing already existing kin ties, they quite often ask influential non-kin to perform this function. While the obligations created by godparenthood in Malta, as in Italy, are not as demanding as they are in Spain, and Spanish America,[1] the godparent (*parrinu*) is expected to favour his godchild (*filjozz*), if not the child's father.[2] Thus the institution of godparenthood plays a part in the system of patronage. Influential persons, however, are more often asked to become marriage witnesses. This relationship is not enduring. When influential non-kin are asked to fill this office it is done as much to increase the prestige of the families of the couple getting married as it is to honour a patron.

There is constant informal contact between relatives living in the same village. These informal meetings strengthen kin ties and ensure that people have a wide knowledge of their kin. Thus a friend in Farrug was able to name 49 households in the village (20 per cent of the total) whose members were descended from his father's six siblings. Although the spread of this old man's family was unusual, no one in the village did not have some relatives living there. The many cross-cutting bonds of kinship thus reinforce the multiplex ties created by neighbourhood, common culture and shared devotion to common symbols, and bind together the inhabitants of a village into the tightly united community which outsiders see.

[1] See Gallatin Anderson, *A Survey of Italian God-parenthood* (The Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers, No. 15; Berkeley, 1956), J. A. Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), pp. 107 f.; and Sidney W. Mintz and Eric R. Wolf, 'An Analysis of Ritual Co-parenthood (Compadrazgo)', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, VI (1950), 341–68.

[2] The reciprocal term *xbin* is used between a godparent and the father of his godchild. Friends and even strangers often use it to address one another; it is a way of reducing social distance and making possible a more intimate association. Michael Kenny in his book, *A Spanish Tapestry* (London, Cohen and West, 1961), p. 72, notes that this is also an Andalusian custom.

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[p.40]

CHAPTER IV

The Basis of Leadership

621 [192] [622] [551] The Maltese word for leader, *mexxej*, is seldom heard, and then only in reference to the leader of a political party. I once asked a parish priest who were the leaders of the village. He laughed and replied that there weren't any, because his parishioners did not like leaders. With the exception of the professionals and *il-puliti* from the towns, all the inhabitants of a village usually call one another by their Christian names and in general look upon each other as equals. This egalitarian outlook is compounded of many factors, of which the most important are similar occupation, standard of living and values, the detailed knowledge of each other's personal lives that comes with residence in a face-to-face community, and 178 jealousy. Any person who attempts to lead or to try to start 578 something new – such as a village playground – is derided. His 621 true motive is seen as self aggrandizement and his enemies and envious neighbours are quick to point this out to others who may [539] not have realized it. 'Envy follows the wise man like his shadow' (*L-ghira titrot wara l-gharef bhal dellu mieghu*), goes the Maltese [609] proverb. Professionals and outsiders, especially if they are from the town, are occasionally able to start something new. Their social distance from most of the community protects them from the full impact of the envy and gossip which moulds so much of village life.

554 621 713 But in spite of the absence of official lay leaders and the conservative pressure of envy and gossip, there are a number of persons who have a greater say than others in the affairs of the community. They are able to do this by virtue of their social position, their occupation or office in one of the village associations or their influence with the parish priest. These persons, together with the parish priest, form the aggregate which can be [192] said to run the affairs of the community. While there is no generic term for this aggregate, those who compose it are sometimes referred to as *il-kbarat*, 'the big ones', or more derogatively as

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in-ejus il-kbar, 'the big heads'. But if asked, a person will often deny that such persons exist, and reply, 'Here we are all the same; we are all from the village'.

II

The authority of the State is represented by the police, who are formally responsible for law and order. Each village has a police station manned by a small contingent of constables under a sergeant. Several villages make up a police district under an inspector. In Malta most policemen live outside the villages in which they work. But it is usual for Gozitan constables stationed in Malta to be quartered in the police stations to which they are assigned.

In addition to their official duties of law enforcement, the police distribute voting certificates, help conduct censuses and give out the allotments of free food to old age pensioners and people on relief.[1] They also perform many favours for local residents. They help people fill out government forms, and occasionally allow the station telephone to be used for private calls. They are sometimes able to mediate in local disputes. Disputants very often report each other for insults, threats or some minor infraction of the law – throwing waste water and rubbish in the street is one of the most common – thus hoping to strangle their enemies in its due process. The police constable on duty is often able to reconcile the disputants and persuade them to withdraw the charges and counter-charges.

In general, the punitive role that the police are occasionally forced to play is offset by their role as distributors of government assistance and by their general helpfulness. District inspectors try to avoid personal relations with the people in their districts since they must prosecute all criminal cases, and personal ties might prove awkward. Sergeants and constables, on the other hand, normally maintain friendly social contact with the local inhabitants. They are often invited for drinks during feasts and weddings, and quite a number marry local girls. The Maltese police thus play

[1] The government has distributed surplus U.S. agricultural products to different groups of needy people since 1956. This food was first secured through the Co-operative for American Relief to Everywhere, Inc. (C.A.R.E., Inc.) and more recently through the Catholic Relief Services of America. The Department of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare, not the police, selects the beneficiaries.

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Partly because of the temporary nature of their assignments, but also because they are usually city-bred, they generally keep themselves aloof from the people amongst whom they work. With but few exceptions, they take little or no part in the social life of the communities to which they are assigned. But they are nevertheless respected figures. Where they are tolerant of village customs, not too mercenary, and take a patronal interest in the personal problems of their clients, they will have, in addition to prestige, a large personal following. This has enabled a number of former District Medical Officers to stand successfully for elected office.

School teachers are another group of people with high prestige. Every village and almost every hamlet in Malta and Gozo now has a government school. Headmasters usually live outside the villages in which they work. They begin their careers in the small rural villages and move into the larger and more important schools as they gain experience and seniority. They are rarely in a village long enough to be asked to take part in its social life. Village-born teachers, on the other hand, normally teach in their home villages, where they often occupy important offices in the associations. But even where he no longer resides in his place of birth the teacher or headmaster, as a village son with high prestige, is often asked to take an active part in its social life. The president of the St. Roque Band Club in Farrug, for example, is headmaster of the primary school in a neighbouring village, where he has lived since he married there more than forty years ago. He has been a member of the club's committee for most of that time, and its president for the last twenty years. Until two years ago he was also procurator of the Confraternity of St. Roque.

VI

The structure of authority in the villages of Malta and Gozo, because of the importance of offices and associations which are either focused on or articulated with the Church, bears a certain superficial resemblance to the civil/religious hierarchy which has been described in Mexican villages.[1] But it differs significantly; it is neither a hierarchy, nor is it formally related to the structure of government.

[1] See, for instance, Fernando Camara, 'Religious and Political Organization', in *Heritage of Conquest*, Sol Tax, ed. (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1952), *passim*.

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of government. While the parish priest in Malta is the official village representative of the Church and has authority to act for it on most matters, the police represent only the law enforcement function of government; all other functions and services of government are administered from Valletta. In this respect the villages of Malta are unique.

On the other hand, there is a relation between social status and the functional requirements of the authority system. In any given community, the people with the highest status usually fill the most important offices, since such offices require the standing, skills and contacts which they possess. There is thus a rough grading of office holders in terms of their social status and the authority and prestige attached to their offices. Upward mobility through this structure is usually dependent upon factors such as education and occupation rather than on having held other, and less important, offices. Once a person has become the president of his local band club, in other words has attained the highest secular office in the village, and has a social status which commands respect outside, he may be elected to political office.

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[p.74]

CHAPTER VI
Festa Partiti

578 621 Village unity is an ideal, and all villages try to present a tightly united front to the outside world. In spite of this, all are divided internally by cleavages which cut across the community at various levels. Some of these divisions are only temporary, and disappear when the issues out of which they have arisen are resolved. Others, which may have arisen out of temporary issues, have for one reason or another become a permanent part of the social scene. But regardless of their origin or duration, these divisions are painfully real to the villagers. Persons made vulnerable through a network of personal relations are often forced to commit themselves to a particular division. In doing so, they become opposed to neighbours and kinsmen who are committed to the other side. [602] This is one of the characteristics of life in all small villages. It is particularly true of communities, such as those in Malta, in which the inhabitants are closely related through kinship and affinity.

192 578 621 [665] [794] The Maltese call these divisions *partiti* (sing., *partit*). The term thus corresponds not only to groups of the order which we in English would call 'parties', but also to those to which we would apply the term 'factions'. Political parties are called partiti, and so are rival groups such as the two in Kortin which competed over the rebuilding of the church. Partiti are said to have *pika* between them. *Pika* denotes relations of competition, ill-feeling, hostility. There is little about the word which suggests the good-natured competition that can exist between rival school football or cricket teams. On the contrary, if there is *pika* between two groups, a no-holds-barred competition is expected. Partiti are thus considered to be a bad thing. They disrupt the harmony of the community and make it more difficult to project the ideal image of village unity to the outside world.

575 578 621 794 796 The oldest permanent division that exists in the villages is between the supporters of rival band clubs. This division is related to the cult of saints. In the previous chapter it was noted that

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besides the patron saint, parishes celebrate many other saints. The feasts of these secondary saints are normally not as lavish as the annual festa of the patron. But many villages celebrate two large festas: one for the titular saint of the parish, and the other for a secondary saint who has assumed almost equal social importance. Where this occurs, a village is divided into two partiti, each of which has its own band club and celebrates one of the saints. The partiti compete over almost every aspect of the festa, including the decoration of the streets, the adornment of the statue, the number of guest bands and, above all, the fireworks. Even the exact number of communicants, the size of candles and the quantity of light bulbs illuminating the façade of the church often become the subject of dispute. Farruġ is divided by this type of rivalry. One partit is dedicated to St. Martin, the titular of the parish, the other to St. Roque.

The origins of these festa partiti, where they can be traced, are very much alike. Most of them came into existence sometime between 1850 and the turn of the century, and most arose out of disputes between persons concerned with the celebration of the titular festa and those interested in the cult of some lesser saint. The latter were usually members of the confraternity dedicated to that saint.[1] These factions in time became centred on separate social clubs, and eventually acquired brass bands. The clubs provided a permanent institutional basis for the rivalry. As time went on, the partiti became more violent in their disputes and in the pressure they put upon individuals to support them. Finally in 1935, the Church, long alarmed at the extremes to which the devotion to some saints had been carried in certain villages, took steps to eliminate the competition. It promulgated a series of regulations designed to reduce the scale on which secondary feasts could be celebrated. These stipulated that for secondary feasts there was to be no Translation of Holy Relics on the eve of the feast, that only the church and the area immediately adjacent to it could

[1] Cf. Rob. Mifsud Bonnici, *Ġrajja Tal-Mużika F'Malta u Ghawdex* (Malta, Giov. Muscat, 1954), pp. 38 f. He suggests that these partiti developed out of a dispute between persons who wanted to play sacred music by the Maltese composer Vincenzo Bugeja (1806–60) and those who preferred that of his rival, Paolo Nani (1814–1904). As far as I could determine, however, the only partiti which arose directly out of this dispute are those in Żebbuġ. On the other hand, many rival partiti, once established, played the music of either Bugeja or Nani during their feasts. The former took a star as their symbol, the latter an eagle. Today partiti in many villages are still nicknamed either *tal-istilla* or *tal-ajkla* after this once-important division.

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be illuminated and that only one band on the eve and one on the day of the feast would be allowed. Although they are now ignored, the regulations also placed limits upon the variety, quantity and duration of firework displays. Finally, they drew attention to the already existing regulations that church decorations and new works of art introduced for secondary feasts should be less costly and beautiful than those for titular feasts.[1]

Parish priests were expected to insist on the observance of these regulations, and they succeeded so well that some secondary feasts were reduced to minor celebrations. Moreover, the *pika* between the partiti in Żabbar and Qrendi was so violent that the secondary feasts there were suppressed completely.[2] This served as a stern warning to others.

II

The story of the origin and development of the festa partiti in Farrug is in many respects similar to the accounts which I collected about festa partiti in other villages. It might, therefore, be helpful to examine it in some detail. Before 1877 there were no festa partiti in the village; everyone co-operated in the celebration of the feast of St. Martin, the patron of the parish. By all accounts it was a humble one, and lasted only one day. This period is described as an idyllic time during which the village was happy and united. But in 1876 a new parish priest arrived, and after that the scene began to change. Dun Rokku, the new priest, not only had a strong personal devotion to the saint after whom he had been named, but he was also from a village where there was a strong secondary partit devoted to St. Roque. Within a year he established a confraternity dedicated to St. Roque in order to 'inject some more life into this rural parish', according to the president of the St. Roque Band Club. The first feast in honour of St. Roque was celebrated in October 1878 to mark the establishment of the confraternity. Although the new secondary feast was at first a simple affair, it and the titular feast grew during the next few years.

[1] Concilium Regionale Melitense (1935), *Decreta* (Malta, Empire Press, 1936), p. 91.

[2] In Żabbar the devotion to St. Michael, the secondary patron, died out almost completely, though the *pika* between the bands has persisted. But in Qrendi the devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, the secondary patron, has continued as strong as ever. In 1938 the Archbishop reinstated the confraternity dedicated to her, which his predecessor suppressed in 1935, but the partit band is still not allowed to play for her feast.

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few years. In 1880 the new confraternity dedicated an altar in the church to its patron, and by 1886 some persons were beginning to grumble about having to pay for another feast. There was a feeling of 'you collect for your feast, and we'll collect for ours.'

In 1888 an incident occurred which changed the course of the rivalry between the supporters of the two saints, which until then appears to have been rather mild. Dun Rokku, who was the procurator of the parish church, tried to increase the rent on some of the local property it owned. There was an outcry, and some persons went to the Bishop to complain that not only had Dun Rokku been diverting parish funds to buy new street decorations for the feast of St. Roque, but he was also raising rents to continue this work. The complaints resulted in an investigation, following which the procura of the church was taken from Dun Rokku and given to a prominent member of the village, who favoured St. Martin. This action, not surprisingly, infuriated Dun Rokku. From that day onward, so the accounts relate, he threw his full support openly behind the feast of St. Roque.

Some time after this, the partiti each formed their own social clubs. According to St. Martin supporters, their club grew out of a pre-existing band club, but that of their rivals was not established until after the First World War. They thus consider that they have seniority. St. Roque partisans, on the other hand, deny this seniority. They maintain that both clubs came into being out of the former club around the turn of the century. Consequently they have equal seniority. However, both clubs claim that the records crucial to the question of seniority were destroyed by enemy action during the last war. There is thus no documentary evidence for either claim, a fact which makes for deadlock whenever the issue of seniority is raised.

Dun Rokku was a strongminded priest, and he ruled the village for fifty-six years. When he finally died in 1932 at the age of 90, he was blind and deaf. During his many years in the parish he did much to beautify the church. Unfortunately, so people recount, he also introduced the hated partiti that divided the village. Through a variety of means at the disposal of a parish priest, he succeeded in wooing or coercing three-fourths of the village into his partit. There are many stories about the old man and the methods he used to recruit supporters. One is that he would make it difficult for people to marry unless they were, or became, members of the

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578 621 79 Confraternity of St. Roque. Unfortunately, at this point, it is not possible to distinguish fact from myth. The tales are accepted as reality, and so help to formulate the attitude of St. Martin supporters toward their rivals. However, when the old priest died, it was discovered that most of the festal finery of the parish church had been purchased in the name of the Confraternity of St. Roque. St. Martin supporters were in the humiliating position of having to beg their rivals for the use of the church valuables in order to decorate the church for the feast of the parish patron. Moreover, while the old priest had controlled the celebration of St. Martin, he had allowed the lay leaders of the St. Roque partit a free hand in planning their feast.

578 621 665 At this time the St. Martin club was split over national politics, and a faction composed of Strickland supporters left and founded a new club. Though both clubs remained loyal to St. Martin, there was trouble between them. Older St. Roque partisans recount with amusement how a report to the police by the secretary of the parent club resulted in twenty members of the new club being arrested and fined for gambling. But the hostility between these two factions declined when Strickland made his peace with the Church, and in 1934 they reunited.

578 621 713 714 The burden of redressing the balance between the partiti fell upon the old priest's successor, and upon those who followed him. There were many incidents between these priests and the St. Roque partit, and on several occasions the former had to send for police protection. In spite of the 1935 regulations, the St. Roque partit retained its numerical superiority as well as the church decorations during the 'thirties. It was not until 1942 that a shrewd parish priest succeeded in bringing the silver altar front out of the St. Roque strongroom into that of the parish church, where it has remained ever since.

The rivalry between the partiti lay dormant during the Second World War, as the people united to fight for survival. But it flared up again immediately after the war, as did similar rivalry in other villages. Both clubs organized musical bands for the first time. After a series of incidents which culminated in the parish priest again having to send for police protection, this time against angry St. Martin supporters, the rivalry began to decline somewhat. This decline was brought about chiefly by the effects of emigration, improvements in local transport, the establishment of a number

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of new associations in the village and the increased activity of political parties.

During the mid-'fifties emigration drained away many of the most active supporters of the partiti. In 1954 alone, no fewer than two dozen men between 18 and 38 left the village for Australia and Canada. Each club lost key bandsmen, and the two bands, already heavily bolstered with outside players, never recovered. A constantly improving bus service enabled young men to go to the 'talkies' in other villages, or just stroll up and down Kingsway in Valletta – a very popular pastime with young people from all over Malta – instead of spending the evening in their village clubs. During this period the Football Club, MUSEUM and Catholic Action were established in the village and began to draw potential partit leaders into other spheres of activity. The Football Club was particularly damaging in this respect. As a neutral social club it provided a place where the young men of the two partiti, who normally never entered one another's clubs, could meet. A number of friendships developed between them, and it soon became the most popular club in the village. Finally, the increased activity of the national political parties during the elections in 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1955 drew the attention of the villagers away from purely parochial concerns and bound them up in rivalries of a different order, which often cut across traditional allegiances. This created factions within the clubs and weakened the partiti.

Rivalry flared up again in 1960, when the supporters of St. Martin, intent upon celebrating the centenary of their patron, staged the greatest festa in the history of the village. But the political and religious fervour of the 1961 election campaign soon captured the attention of the partisans, and the festa of the following year was a pale shadow of the gala spectacle of the year before.

Before proceeding any further, we must unravel the rather complicated tangle of partit, club and confraternity. All festa partiti are composed of three groups: (i) the band club, which provides the leadership of the partit and includes most of the active male supporters, many of whom are also members of (ii) the confraternity allied with the partit or dedicated to its patron, and (iii) the rank and file of men, women and children who are members neither of the confraternity nor of the club, but still support the partit against its rival. The central strand running through all

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these groups is the loyalty of the people to the partit and its patron, shown by supporting the many activities that the leaders organize, and by boycotting similar activities of their rivals. These include fund-raising lotteries and fairs, weekly collections and partit picnics and pilgrimages. During the festa, supporters march with the statue, dress themselves and their houses up and in general celebrate their patron. Their rivals often walk about unshaven and glowering, and do not normally decorate their houses.

Although most people in a village divided by this type of rivalry will choose, or be forced, to take sides, a few are able to avoid this commitment, or at least say they have. These are often priests and teachers, who sometimes find it to their advantage to remain neutral, as do outsiders who have married into the village. MUSEUM members are not permitted to maintain partit affiliation though, of course, many do. Neutral people contribute to both feasts. A true partisan would never contribute to the external feast of his rival, although he might give something to the parish priest for the internal feast. During periods of intense rivalry, even these contributions cease. Thus, virtually the entire £1,465 which St. Martin's centenary cost was contributed by his supporters alone. Six months later their rivals spent £600 on the feast of St. Roque.

The band club is the organizational and social centre of a partit. All members of the club are supporters of the partit, but not all supporters of the partit are members of the club, though nonmembers are normally welcome to come and use its facilities. To a certain extent, membership of the club depends upon the availability of ready cash, for many men are reluctant to part with the subscription fee as long as they can make use of the club's premises. Though the confraternities are open to all adults without regard to partit affiliation, there is normally a positive correlation between partit and confraternity membership. Generally speaking, the supporters of the titular feast enrol in the older confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Rosary. These confraternities are established in all parishes, and play an important part in many religious ceremonies. Supporters of the secondary patron enrol in the confraternity dedicated to him, if they feel inclined to join one.

These general principles can be illustrated by data collected in Farrug. Table No. 4 below shows the relative strengths of the two

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partiti. Of the 617 inhabitants of both sexes over twenty-one years old, 48 per cent support St. Martin, 42 per cent St. Roque, and 10 per cent are uncommitted. Although the numerical strength of the partiti is almost the same, each claims two-thirds of the total population. Of those who claim to be neutral, 63 per cent were born outside the village.

TABLE 4. Farrug: Festa Partit Affiliation and Place of Birth

PARTIT	PLACE OF BIRTH			
	Village	*Outside*	*Total*	*Percentage*
St. Martin	250	47	297	48
St. Roque	219	42	261	42
Uncommitted	22	37	59	10
Total	491	126	617	100

Table 5 shows the relation between partit affiliation and membership in one of the three confraternities in Farrug. Of the members of the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Rosary who belong to no other confraternity 84 and 64 per cent respectively belong to the St. Martin partit. Ninety-five per cent of the members of the Confraternity of St. Roque belong to his partit. It is interesting to observe that 83 per cent of those who declare that they are not committed to either partit have also avoided confraternity membership.

TABLE 5. Farrug: Festa Partit Affiliation and Confraternity Membership

CONFRATERNITY	PARTIT			
	St. Martin	*St. Roque*	*None*	*Total*
B/Sacrament	57	8	3	68
St. Roque	5	87	–	92
Holy Rosary	20	8	5	33
Mixed	24	23	2	49
None	191	135	49	375
Total	297	261	59	617

Recruitment to a partit is quite straightforward, for members do not now change sides, although this occasionally occurred in the generation following their establishment. Today a person is either born into a partit, or marries into it. Children support the partit of their parents, and an outsider marrying into the village generally supports that of his (or her) spouse. Marriages between

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Marriages between
621 members of rival partiti are regarded as undesirable. They occa-
[582] sionally take place, but the division of loyalty within the nuclear
[586] family which results often leads to quarrels and, occasionally, to
[593] temporary separations. (The favourite festa-time story of the wife
[538] who refuses to cook for her husband because he belongs to the other partit is based on fact!) Of the marriages contracted within Farrug, 72 per cent took place between members of the same partit. Children of mixed marriages support the feast of their favourite parent: boys normally follow their fathers and girls their mothers.

578- I recorded only two cases in Farrug of adults who changed
621 their partit affiliation. Both occurred over fifty years ago. A leading member of the St. Roque partit left it after a heated quarrel with Dun Rokku over the design for new street decorations. He subsequently became one of the other partit's most honoured members, and even wrote a book on the life of St. Martin. The second man left St. Roque when he married the daughter of the president of the St. Martin club. I was told that the girl's father had insisted on the change before he gave his consent to the marriage. The young man went on to become president of the club, as did his only son. In another village a few young men left their partit after a quarrel with one of the leaders, but all returned after a year.

621 Although an outsider who marries into a village generally supports the partit of his spouse, a few of them, particularly the men, succeed in remaining neutral. Of the 122 outsiders who married into Farrug,[1] 28 per cent of the men but only 8 per cent of the women remained uncommitted. A few even chose to support partiti opposed to those of their spouses. Thus a women from Qrendi who married a St. Martin supporter and moved to Farrug became a follower of St. Roque because she had been a keen member of the secondary partit in her native village. Children of families in which one of the parents is an outsider, especially if the parent remains neutral, often support the partit of their friends rather than those of their parents or siblings. A case in point is that of the president of the St. Roque club, and his brother. Their father was an outsider who, because of his position as headmaster, made a point of remaining strictly neutral. Though his wife was from a St. Martin family, one son supported St. Martin, the other St. Roque.

[162] [1] 61 men and 61 women. These marriages represent 54 per cent of the total in the village.

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Children begin to express partit affiliation when they are between twelve and fourteen years old. At this age they are old enough to follow the processions and take part in the demonstrations on their own. Fund raisers make demands on them, and they are asked to help decorate the streets. At this age they also begin to play in the band. A youngster would jeopardize his social standing with his elders and with his age mates if he failed to take a firm position with regard to one of the saints. This would remove him from much of the community's social life. Consequently, by the time a village boy has reached fifteen, he has usually selected his partit, thus accepting and becoming part of the fabric of partit rivalry which will hold him until he dies or leaves the village.

There is some relation between occupational class and partit affiliation: in general, the supporters of titular saints belong to a higher occupational class than their rivals. The reason for this will be discussed a little later. The data I gathered in Farrug illustrate this correlation clearly. As shown in Table No. 6 below, 83 per cent of the village's professional and white-collar workers belong to the St. Martin partit, while only 38 per cent of those engaged in agriculture do so.

TABLE 6. Farrug: Partit Affiliation and Occupational Class

OCCUPATION			PARTIT AFFILIATION	
	Number	*Percentage of Lab. Force*	*St. Martin*	*St. Roque*
Professional and clerical	12	4	83%	17%
Service and skilled	115	39	55	45
Semi- and unskilled	124	42	48	52
Agricultural	45	15	38	62
Total	296	100		

So much for the origin and social composition of the partiti. I may just observe here that festa partiti are not usually based on territorial divisions. Since upward mobility does not involve change of partit, but is often accompanied by a change of residence, all residential areas are mixed. Nonetheless, there is a tendency for supporters of the titular partiti to live in the better residential area near the church, and for their rivals to live in the poorer sections more remote from the central square. This is a reflection of the differing occupational class of the members. This

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residence pattern is certainly true in Farrug, and I observed much the same thing in other villages divided by festa partiti. In Farrug, 65 per cent of the people living on the main square and the four streets leading into it supported St. Martin, but only 46 per cent of those living in other parts of the village did so.

Disputes between partiti usually concern matters of precedence or their ability to display devotion to their saints. Each partit has certain rights, usually secured at the cost of clashes with its rival. These include the position and participation of the club and confraternity in Church processions and at other functions, the routes over which these processions travel and the possession of certain property and its display in the parish church. Any attempt to extend or reduce them is resisted by the partit affected, which takes action to protect its interests by trying to influence the Church authorities, who must make the final decisions.

The structural position of a partit determines the kind of pressure that it can bring to bear upon the Church. Those of titular saints are, in a sense, the establishment parties. As we have seen, the Church seeks to build up their celebrations at the expense of the secondary ones. Hence a titular partit can negotiate from a strong position: its ultimate sanction is refusal to participate in the feast of the village patron, an event which the Church is anxious to see celebrated with great pomp. Secondary partiti, on the other hand, are inherently opposed to the Church in matters of festa policy. They try to increase the scale of their feasts, while the Church tries to reduce them. They dare not cancel their feasts for fear that the Church would accuse them of making trouble and suppress them, as it did the secondary festas of Our Lady of Lourdes in Qrendi, and St. Michael in Żabbar.

Their position in opposition to Church policy has given most secondary partiti a certain *esprit de corps* and unity of purpose that their rivals often lack. This has made them better able to withstand the divisive effects of the political factions which have recently weakened many of their rivals. It has also generally resulted in the emergence of stronger leaders. Secondary partiti are often united around a single professional class leader who can not only hold the partit together in the face of the attacks of its opponents, but can also argue intricate points of Canon Law with the monsignori at the Curia and, at times, with the Archbishop himself. As we have observed, the secondary partiti generally have

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fewer professional class members. Consequently competition for the role of leader does not occur so often, and there is a longer tenure of office. In the partit of a titular saint, with its better-educated members, there are more men with the necessary qualities of leadership, and accordingly more competition for office and a high turnover of office holders. The competition both creates and results from internal factions which weaken the group. In Farrug, for example, the President of the St. Roque Band Club has led the St. Roque partit more or less continuously since Dun Rokku died thirty years ago. He is also just about the only member of the partit with the educational qualifications and social position required of a leader. The key positions of the St. Martin Band Club, in contrast, constantly pass between about half a dozen educated persons. This divided leadership has weakened the club; and on one occasion it even split in two. The strong leadership and internal unity of the secondary partiti, plus the fact that they rarely present claims that are not well founded, has enabled them to score many successes in spite of their apparently unfavourable position in relation to the Church.

Disputes between festa partiti are all very much alike. A typical dispute begins when leaders of a secondary partit petition the parish priest for some new privilege, for example the right to renew the bouquets of artificial flowers which adorn the statue of their saint. The parish priest normally refuses at first, and tells them that he thinks the old flowers are quite serviceable. His policy is to let sleeping dogs lie. Moreover, he has to take into account the rule that decorations for secondary feasts must not be more beautiful than those for titular ones. But the saint's supporters continue to bring influence to bear on him. In the meantime, members of the titular partit have learned of their rivals' move and rush to the parish priest to point out that the old flowers are more than adequate. They threaten to cancel their feast if he gives in on this matter. The priest is now caught in a vice, and the pressure on him builds up. Finally, he agrees to refer the whole case to the Curia and passes the matter upwards, usually with a feeling of relief. Relations between him and the partiti return to normal, as the scene of the struggle shifts to the Curia.

The Curia normally appoints experts to re-investigate the merits of the case, including the proposed design of the flowers. Leaders from both partiti spend a great deal of their time at the

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578 Curia trying to persuade all concerned, from the Bishop down, to
621 think the way they do. This may go on for years, for the Curia,
793 knowing the trouble that lies ahead, is usually in no hurry to give
794 its decision. When the final decision is handed down, it is usually favourable, and the design for a set of flowers less beautiful and costly than the corresponding set of the titular partit is furnished. The secondary partit then instructs the craftsmen to begin work. The titular partit announces to everyone that it will cancel its next feast.

It often happens, however, that just before the new bouquets (or whatever *objets d'art* are concerned) are inaugurated during the secondary festa, the parish priest discovers that most of the Curia's specifications have been ignored. The new flowers are far more beautiful than they were supposed to be. He is furious. The guilty leaders of the secondary partit apologize profusely and take immediate steps to make them less beautiful. Occasionally, the priest may discipline the partit by temporarily reducing the scale of its feast. The secondary partit then holds its feast, and the flowers are admired by all visitors. Strong police reinforcements usually prevent trouble from occurring. Relations between the parish priest and the titular partit are gradually re-established and it agrees, usually for some concessions on his part, to celebrate its feast again. But in a year or so, a new dispute occurs, and the process starts all over again.

578 Sometimes relations between a parish priest and a partit reach
621 a deadlock that can be broken only by an outside peacemaker,
625 frequently an officer of the police. The police in any case have a
793 vital interest in the degree of rivalry existing in the villages, as it is
794 their business to keep order during the feast. The number of police on duty at these times ranges from a dozen or so in villages such as Siġġiewi and Naxxar, where there are no partiti, to around 100 in those where there are strong ones, such as Mqabba and
[626] Żurrieq. Occasionally a parish priest is threatened, frightened by a home-made bomb, or attacked; he then often requests, and generally receives, a transfer to another parish.

543 So far only the more important encounters between partiti have
575 been discussed. There are many other events to keep their rivalry
578 alive throughout the year. The numerous fund-raising fairs of
621 the band clubs are occasions for the village to divide along festa partit lines. While supporters of the partit running the fair flock

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to it, their rivals invariably stage their own fair or, and this is more usual, hire several buses and noisily leave the village for a picnic or a pilgrimage to some shrine of their saint. Many other incidents divide groups and associations along partit lines. For example, a former head teacher of the Farrug school told me that he had once tried to get the girls to wear the dark blue hair ribbons which are supposed to be part of their school uniforms. He was astounded when half the girls flatly refused. It was then explained to him that blue is the colour of the St. Roque partit, so the St. Martin girls could not be expected to wear it.

Let us now look at some of the major skirmishes which have taken place in Farrug during the last ten years. During 1952 and 1953 there was a dispute over an attempt by the St. Roque procession to pass along a street over which St. Martin's followers claimed exclusive rights. When the inexperienced new parish priest backed the St. Roque claim before the Archbishop, he brought violently into the open a dispute over which his predecessor had successfully procrastinated for years. The followers of St. Martin not only refused to celebrate their feast, but also succeeded in frightening the unfortunate priest rather badly by exploding a huge rocket in the drainpipe under his house. Some St. Martin partisans gleefully recounted to me that the priest was soon transferred to another parish, and that during his last week in Farrug he had asked the police to escort him between his house and the church. Relations between the Church and the St. Martin partit were restored when the Archbishop modified the St. Roque procession route.

In 1956 the St. Martin Band Club refused to celebrate the titular festa because the Archbishop had given the Confraternity of St. Roque permission to renew the four bunches of artificial flowers which decorate the main altar during his feast. The following year the St. Roque Band Club refused to play at the installation ceremony of the new parish priest because the Curia had just turned down the confraternity's request for permission to hang a new picture over its altar. In 1960 the same priest angered the St. Roque partit by refusing to let it participate in the St. Martin centenary celebrations. The poor man's hands were tied, for the St. Martin club had declared that it would have nothing to do with the feast if its rival took any part in it. At the moment, there is another struggle in the offing. The Confraternity of St. Roque

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578 recently petitioned the Archbishop for permission to renew the
621 platform on which their saint stands during the feast. St. Martin
79 supporters have threatened to cancel their feast if permission is granted, as it probably will be, for the present platform is old and falling to pieces.

575 While I was in the village, there was also a dispute over pre-
578 cedence between the two band clubs on the occasion of the
621 installation ceremony of Dun Frangisk, the present parish priest.
793 This is a good example of a dispute over precedence, and it is one which recurs in some form every time a new parish priest is appointed to a village where there are two band clubs. The band which has precedence has the right to march last and to escort the priest from the church to his house after the ceremony. The other club escorts him from his house to the church before the ceremony. Quite straightforward, but clubs rarely agree on which one has precedence. The dispute thus presents a knotty problem that brings a new priest abruptly up against the realities of parish politics within a few days after his arrival. His handling of the matter may well govern his relations with the partiti during the rest of his time in the village.

On the evening when Dun Frangisk moved into the parish, the St. Martin Band Club gave a party to welcome him and to bid farewell to his predecessor, who had been its strong ally. The party was a great success. The departing priest received a huge coloured portrait of St. Martin as a farewell gift, and Dun Frangisk met all the St. Martin leaders and blessed the club's new television set. A few days later, the St. Martin leaders called on the new priest and offered to provide a musical escort to and from the church for his installation ceremony. This was to be followed by a concert in the square and a firework display. The offer pleased him and he accepted. During the next few days the St. Martin club went about collecting the £25 the band programme would cost, thus advising the village of its plans.

Until then Dun Frangisk had heard nothing from the St. Roque club, a fact which rather disturbed him.

Two days later he called in person at both clubs to invite them to attend his installation ceremony and the reception following it. But he found the clubs deserted. The members of the St. Martin committee were away offering their congratulations to the old parish priest, who that night was holding his installation ceremony

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in his new parish. Most of the St. Roque leaders, for their part, were off supervising a fund-raising fair which they had hastily organized to help ensure that no St. Roque supporter would be tempted to attend the lavish reception of their former antagonist. Finding no one of importance at the clubs, Dun Frangisk left the invitations with the bar-keepers.

Two days later a group of St. Roque leaders called to thank him for his invitation, at the same time informing him that they were looking forward to escorting him to and from the church with their band. Dun Frangisk had been warned by his predecessor that this might happen, so he asked them to meet him the next evening to discuss the details of the programme with the other club.

Next morning the members of the St. Martin partit were furious over this move of their rivals. They grumbled to me that now only a miracle could save the band programme they had been planning. It was the main topic of conversation in the village that day. Many people were on hand to watch the St. Martin committee members enter the parish priest's house that afternoon. Soon after, the rival delegation, headed by the vice-president, the secretary and the treasurer of the St. Roque Band Club, joined the meeting. The first session lasted two hours. I saw the young priest shortly afterwards. He looked rather stunned, and exclaimed, 'They can't agree. They both want to escort me to my house! It's like a U.N. session. Nothing is settled and we meet again in an hour.' I learned later that he had had a difficult time preventing the rivals from coming to blows.

They met again, but the deadlock remained unbroken. The St. Martin delegates maintained that their club had the right to escort the priest to his house because it was the oldest, it represented the official patron saint of the village and it had been the only one to play during the past two installation ceremonies. Their rivals rejected all these claims, and suggested that they draw lots for the privilege of playing last, or hire outside bands to play, and let them decide. The St. Martin representatives rejected these suggestions. Finally, at midnight, the parish priest put an end to the wrangle. He told them that unless they could decide the matter among themselves, he would have to decline their offers to play for him. He asked them to let him have their decision by the following evening.

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575 The next day each delegation called separately on Dun Frangisk and told him that they had not been able to reach a decision. 578 In fact, they had not met again. St. Martin supporters were very 621 bitter about the whole affair, and said that since they could not 743 play, they would also cancel the firework display they had been planning.

The installation ceremony took place three days later as planned. Neither band played, but each fired off a number of petards during the day, and each gave the newly installed priest a rousing salute of fire crackers on his return from the church. The leaders of both partiti attended his reception, separately to be sure, and they were very cordial in their congratulations. The skirmish was over. St. Martin leaders admitted to me that Dun Frangisk had handled himself well, and that he had taken the only sensible course open to him. They declared, however, that he should not have called in person to invite the St. Roque club, but should have sent the more usual printed invitation. The St. Roque leaders, on the other hand, were quite pleased with the way things had gone. They invited Dun Frangisk to a reception in his honour at their club the following week, and shortly afterwards asked him to support their request for a new platform for their saint.

This whole episode must be seen as an attempt by the St. Roque partit to unseat its rival from the position of pre-eminence it had enjoyed during the centenary celebration. It could do this by blocking the St. Martin club's plan to be the only band to play at the installation ceremony. The St. Roque leaders were able to make their first move when Dun Frangisk called in person at their club, thereby assuring them that they be given equal standing with the other, which they felt had been favoured by his predecessor. They would not have made their offer to play if there had been the slightest indication that Dun Frangisk was going to favour their rivals. In fact it is extremely unlikely that the St. Roque club was really planning to play. It had not done so for many years, it had no bandsmen and at the time it did not even have a bandmaster. Finally, it had made no collection to pay for a band. All these facts were known to the St. Martin supporters when they [521] made their offer to play. Furthermore, they had heard indirectly from the St. Roque secretary – who told a policemen in a neighbouring town, who in turn mentioned it to the president of the

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St. Martin club – that the St. Roque club was not planning to participate in the ceremony in protest against the way they had been treated during the centenary. Dun Frangisk's spontaneous move upset their plans.

Although Dun Frangisk favoured the suggestions that the clubs draw lots, or hire outside bands, St. Martin rejected both because they implied that the clubs had equal status. The last time the St. Roque band had played was six years and four parish priests before, when the local police inspector had devised a compromise solution, and the St. Martin leaders had 'allowed' St. Roque to play the last march of the day, while their band escorted the new priest home. They believed any concession they made now would undo the advantage which they felt they had gained as the only functioning band in the village during the past six years.

Thus it came about that no band played at Dun Frangisk's installation ceremony. This greatly surprised the many visitors from the city and the suburbs, but the good people of the district found it quite in accordance with the way things should be, considering the issues involved. At no point in the series of events were the feelings of the young priest, whom all liked, ever considered. His installation had become the vehicle for a clash between the followers of St. Martin and St. Roque. They had been vying with each other for supremacy long before he was born, and would be at it long after he left. Any concessions made for his sake would have to be entered into the eighty-year-old ledger of credits and debits, and might have an important bearing on the outcome of the next series of encounters.

III

Two interesting problems remain to be considered: why festa partiti arose during the fifty years or so after 1850, and what reasons prompted people to join one partit rather than its rival. The factors which caused the partiti to come into existence at this particular period in Maltese history are necessarily complex, and they are dimmed by the time that has elapsed since their foundation. Nonetheless, one can discern several elements which would appear to be related to the general problem. To begin with, during this period there was a sudden increase in the devotion to the Virgin Mary following her apparition in 1858 at Lourdes, and the

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definition of the dogma of her immaculate conception four years earlier, and to St. Joseph, who was declared patron of the Catholic Church in 1870. Virtually all the secondary partiti are dedicated to one of these two.[1] At the same time, there was a general elaboration of the celebrations connected with the cult of saints, including the Italian and Sicilian custom of having bands play during the festas.[2] These were but a part of the more general influx of Italian ideas and customs which accompanied the refugees from Italy of the Risorgimento, who streamed into Malta following 1850. The propaganda efforts of the pro-Italian politicians of the time assisted in the diffusion of these customs, especially in the urban areas.

During this period a conception of social organization new to Malta was also gaining currency, namely the idea of voluntary associations for laymen, and in particular, social clubs for 'gentlemen'. After the establishment in Valletta of the exclusive British Union Club in 1826 and the equally exclusive Casino Maltese in 1850, clubs of various kinds began to spring up in many villages. They multiplied so rapidly that a local chronicler wrote in 1890, 'Today you don't find a village without one or two, nor a city without three or five.'[3]

The latter half of the last century was a period of relative economic prosperity for Malta. This resulted from the increase in military and naval activity after the outbreak of the Crimean War; the sharp expansion in government spending on public works programmes from 1859 to 1865; and the renewed world demand for Maltese cotton as a result of the cotton shortage created by the American Civil War.[4] The economic boom increased the demand for unskilled labour from the villages. This, in turn, helped to disseminate urban-Italian cultural traits. It also provided a financial basis which permitted increased expenditure on festa decorations, fireworks, and above all, uniforms and instruments for the bands. Finally, this period saw the establishment of government schools in all the villages. City-born schoolmasters moved into rural

[1] See Appendix A.

[2] See, for example, Giuseppe Pitrè, *Feste Patronali in Sicilia*, vol. XXI of *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Popolari Siciliane* (Torino-Palermo, Carlo Clausen, 1900), *passim*. He also indicates that a number of Sicilian towns and villages are divided by rivalry between supporters of different saints. (pp. xlvii ff.)

[3] P. P. Castagna, *Lis-Storia Ta Malta* (3 vols.; Valletta, C. Busuttil, 1890), III, 128.

[4] Charles A. Price, *Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration* (Melbourne, Georgian House, 1954), pp. 105 ff.

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communities where they became leaders, and the source of many new ideas and customs. In Ghaxaq, for example, I found that a teacher born in Valletta had been the one to introduce the custom of decorating the streets for the festa.

It is, of course, extremely difficult, if not impossible, to discover the motives which prompted people to choose a particular partit. The only possible clue to at least one set of reasons may well lie in the correlation between occupational class and partit affiliation. Apart from this class alignment, I found no evidence in Farrug, or any other village so divided, of any pre-existing structural division out of which these festa partiti might have developed. In view of the way membership is inherited, it would appear that the position which members of the great-grandfather generation occupied in the village class structure in some way influenced their choice of partit. There is some evidence for this, although not a great deal, to be found in the genealogies of the present generation. Frequent marriages with outsiders, emigration and the changing employment structure of the country over the past six decades have blurred this picture considerably.

But it is certainly possible that the new cult appealed more to those persons who held no office in the older confraternities and who performed no official functions in connection with the celebration of the annual festa of the village patron. Through the new cult they could gain offices and perform functions which hitherto had been monopolized by the circle of the village elite who surrounded the parish priest. Some informants have also mentioned that young men were particularly attracted to the new cult. In this we can see the universal resistance of the young to the authority of their elders, for by becoming active in the new cult, they were asserting their independence from the controls of the older generation. Were the secondary partiti then a form of protest against the established authority, a sort of underdogs' party?

Other facts appear to support the hypothesis that the foundation of the secondary partiti was in some way related to a wider working-class movement. Many of the partiti are dedicated to St. Joseph, the patron saint of the working classes who were beginning to organize themselves into formal associations throughout Europe. In Malta there are many signs that this devotion was very strong. In addition to the many new confraternities dedicated to

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In addition to the many new confraternities dedicated to him after 1850 (in Naxxar, Għargħur, Kirkop and Xagħra, for example) he was chosen as patron of the new parish churches of Kalkara, Qala and Msida. Moreover, four parishes have secondary feasts dedicated to him (Rabat, Għaxaq, Kirkop and Żebbuġ). Besides these Għargħur and Siġġiewi had St. Joseph partiti which succumbed to the 1935 Church regulations.

The identification of secondary partiti in general with St. Joseph is also perhaps reflected in the colour most have chosen as their symbol. It is blue, the colour of the banner of the Confraternity of St. Joseph. The supporters of many secondary partiti, even if their saint is the Virgin Mary, wave blue scarves about to show their loyalty to it. Their rivals display red scarves, after the colour of the banner of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, whose members support the titular saint.

The correlation between partiti and occupational class is also shown in the high proportion of village priests who are sons of families supporting the titular feasts. I once asked the leader of a secondary partit why this was so. He replied that it was only natural since the families of the titular partiti were in much closer contact with the parish priest. Thus their sons, rather than those of rivals, more often became his young helpers and altar boys and received the necessary recommendations to the seminary and other church-run schools. From there, some became priests, and others assumed positions of leadership with the various associations. Other informants suggested it was because the 'best' families support the titular saints, and therefore can afford the additional school fees and loss of earning power that are involved in having their sons become priests.

Of the 41 priests born and now resident in Żurrieq, Kirkop, Qrendi, Mqabba, Luqa, Għaxaq and Żebbuġ, 33 (80 per cent) are sons of families supporting the titular feasts. This percentage gains added importance by the fact that in each of these villages the secondary partit is either equal to or larger than the titular partit. The exception is Żebbuġ, where the secondary partit is decidedly smaller than the titular one. In Farruġ, though the local priest is from a St. Roque family, all the offices connected with the parish church, and 23 of the 30 key positions with Catholic Action, the Football Club and the Labour Committee, are in the hands of St. Martin supporters. Thus the members of titular partiti are not only closer to established authority, they often become part of it.

[1] [i.e. St. Joseph.—Ed.]

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Whatever the reasons for their beginnings in particular villages, there are today festa partiti or at least competing band clubs in nineteen villages and towns. Ten communities are divided by the type of rivalry described above. Of these Gudja has partiti which compete only over two secondary feasts and another, Żebbuġ, has three rival band clubs, two of which compete over the titular feast. Besides these ten, another four towns are divided by rivalry between their constituent parishes, five more are divided by rival band clubs not related to the cult of saints, although the band clubs in one of them, Żabbar, were once allied to festa partiti.

The competition between rival parishes of the same town is very similar to that between festa partiti. In fact the division of Qormi and Rabat (Gozo) into two parishes each came about partly because of the rivalry between festa partiti. Since each parish has its own church and is not limited by the 1935 regulations, the competition between them is even keener than between festa partiti within the same parish. For this reason the feasts of St. Mary and St. George in Rabat (Gozo) and St. George and St. Sebastian in Qormi are probably the most spectacular in the country. Competition between rival band clubs not related to the cult of saints, in contrast, is not as fierce as that between festa partiti. It is, nonetheless, a considerable force in the communities where it exists. Disputes between these band clubs usually involve questions of precedence, such as those which arise over their positions and role during the titular festa or at an installation ceremony of a new parish priest. Failure to reach agreement may mean that one or both boycott the celebration.

Finally, weak festa partiti once existed in another seven villages. But as they were not aligned with band or social clubs, they were not well enough organized to resist the firm pressure the Church began to exert after 1935. Today there is scarcely a trace of their former existence. All festa partiti and rival band clubs, both present and past, are listed in Appendix A.[1]

IV

Implicit throughout this examination of the various types of competing groups described in this chapter and in the previous one, has been the highly formal nature of their interaction. Their disputes are like war games. The action between them takes place

[1] [see p. 142, – Analyst]

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571 578 621 within a framework bounded by the decrees of the Church, the laws of the State and the appropriate body of custom. New pictures are not hung in churches and new procession routes are not followed unless permission has first been obtained from the Church. Action without this permission could result in the suppression of the feast, the desecration of the church or the interdiction of the ringleaders. In the same way, the threats and insults of demonstrating partisans rarely result in physical violence because of the swift penalties that the ever-vigilant police would impose. Permanent truce or peace between the partiti and competing parishes is impossible to achieve owing to the inherent nature of the rivalry which exists between them. It is this state of continuous one-upmanship that provides the driving force behind much of the village politics in Malta. At least it did until the increasing involvement of the people in national politics created a new set of conflicting loyalties that cut deeply across many older ones.

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proportion of clerics and nuns in the Sixth Electoral District helps to explain the relatively low Labour poll there. It is also a significant factor in explaining the overwhelming defeat of the MLP in Gozo. These two districts have the highest proportion of clerics in the country. The Fourth District, in contrast, has the lowest.

TABLE 7. 1962 Elections: Occupational Class and Voting Behaviour[1]

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS[2]	SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES (As percentage of total lab. force)			PERCENTAGE LABOUR VOTES
	Professional[3]	*Skilled*	*Agricultural*	
IInd (Senglea, etc.)	4 (3)	45	4	56
IVth (Żurrieq, etc.)	3 (2)	34	11	47
VIth (Birkirkara, etc.)	6 (4)	33	11	24
Xth (Gozo)	7 (6)	16	38	6
All Districts	5 (3)	32	11	34

IV

It will have been observed that there is a certain superficial similarity between the reasons given here for belonging to the MLP and those suggested in the preceding chapter for recruitment into the secondary festa partiti. One might expect therefore that in comparison with titular partiti, secondary partiti would have a higher proportion of Labour supporters among their members. Unfortunately, owing to the disturbed political situation prevailing at the time, I was not able to gather satisfactory systematic data on this point. Almost all informants with whom I discussed the matter suggested that secondary partiti did in fact have more pro-Mintoff members than their rivals. But the situation is not quite as straightforward as it might appear. To begin with, the statements of informants varied according to their own political beliefs and their position in relation to the festa partiti. Rivals generally tried to place each other in an unfavourable light. Thus an anti-MLP member of a band club supporting a titular feast

[1] Source: *1957 Census: Report on Economic Activities*, pp. 40–111; and *The Malta Government Gazette* (3 March 1962), pp. 585–94.

[2] *IInd* (Cospicua, Senglea, Vittoriosa, Kalkara, Żabbar, M'skala), *IVth* (Żurrieq, Safi, Qrendi, Mqabba, Kirkop, B'bugia, Żejtun, M'xlokk), *VIth* (Birkirkara, Balzan, Lija, Attard, Naxxar, Gharghur).

[3] Percentage of priests, monks and nuns in parenthesis.

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575 would describe the rival club as a Mintoff stronghold, but sug-
578 gested that his own club had relatively few MLP members. In
contrast, a member of the rival club with the same political view
● 621 would often say just the opposite. Parish priests generally gave
665 very conservative estimates of the number of MLP supporters in
the clubs, but usually said that the secondary clubs had more.

621 Another factor which makes it difficult to be dogmatic about
the political alignment of the partiti is that most are located in the
665 southern villages. These communities are reservoirs of industrial
[464] labour and are generally strongly pro-Labour. For this reason,
unbiased informants generally estimated that Labour supporters
made up between half and three-fourths of the membership of all
clubs, but that secondary clubs had slightly more. My own
experience in Farrug confirms this. I found there that about
70 per cent of the members of each partit are pro-Labour, al-
though the leaders of the village MLP group are almost all from
the St. Martin partit. This I suggested was due more to the
shallowness of the leadership resources of the St. Roque partit
than to the political inclination of its members.

575 At the policy level, all clubs usually maintain strict political
621 neutrality. At least, all incorporate clauses to this effect in their
665 by-laws, and many prohibit party newspapers and political dis-
cussions in the club. Nonetheless, some clubs are closely identified
with a particular political party. Of the clubs that are aligned in
this way, those that celebrate the titular feasts generally support
one of the parties allied with the Church, usually the Nationalist
Party; their rivals support the Labour Party. This alignment often
comes about when a leading member of a club seeks political
office. Where this occurs, members of the opposite festa partit, as
a matter of course, give their votes to his chief opponent in
another party, or to a rival in his own party. The political sig-
nificance of the rivalry between festa partiti will be examined in
the following chapter, together with some of the ways in which
political candidates manipulate the partiti, and are, in their turn,
manipulated by them.

But the tendency to political polarity of rival band clubs still
does not explain why the leader of a secondary club, for example,
supports the Labour Party, and not one of the rival parties. The
chief reason for this, quite apart from the fact that he may have a
personal preference for the party, is that the members of his own

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festa partit form the nucleus of his political following. It is not surprising therefore that he should support the party they favour.

There is another interesting way in which festa partiti in general, and secondary partiti in particular, are related to support for the Labour Party. In all villages divided by these partiti, people have become conditioned to opposing the authority of the Church in connection with matters dealing with the celebration of feasts. This, I suggest, has enabled them to accept the anti-clerical outlook of the Labour Party more easily than the people of villages not so divided. An old stone-cutter in Kortin, who was procurator of one of the small chapels in the village, once unconsciously pointed to the structural similarity of the MLP and secondary festa partiti. We were discussing the resemblance of the Strickland crisis of thirty years ago to the present political dispute, when he pointed to the parish church and remarked, 'I've always been against them. I was for Strickland. I'm for Mintoff, and if we had partiti here, I would support the secondary feast.' There is, of course, a difference between the opposition of a secondary partit and that of the MLP. Nonetheless, both oppose the authority of the Church and both resort to attacks on the clergy to drive home their points of view. This is anti-clericalism. Both the festa partiti and the Labour Party make a distinction between the person and the office of the cleric they attack, and they appear to attack the former rather than the latter. But repeated attacks upon the person holding an office may weaken the office itself. Thus prolonged anti-clericalism can lead to anti-religious sentiment, or at least prepare the way for it. This, I feel, has happened in the case of the festa partiti.

In challenging the decisions of the Church relating to matters of festa policy a festa partisan often resorts to violence. He frightens the priest with home-made bombs to show his displeasure, to try and change the decision and even to compel him to leave the village. But he never attacks the ultimate right of the Church or its ministers to make those decisions. Indeed, some friends in Farrug were quite shocked when I suggested that they were doing just this. On the other hand, this constant rebellion against the authority of the Church has accustomed people to being at odds for long periods with their parish priests as well as with the Archbishop. During these times, they often ignore what the Church has to say if it does not agree with the point of view they

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hold. This is the accepted pattern of behaviour, not only in villages divided by festa partiti, but also in others which have disputes with the Church. But it is only in the villages with festa partiti that these disputes, and the related anti-clerical action, take place on a regularly recurring basis. In these villages, though people are devout in observing many details of their religion, constant opposition to the parish priest in matters connected with festas has led them to look upon a measure of anti-clericalism as part of their way of life.

The relative lack of respect for the clergy in these villages has been partly responsible for a rather high turnover of parish priests. It has been shown how uncomfortable festa partiti can make the life of a parish priest. This, plus the meagre living in the smaller parishes, prompts priests to look for openings in wealthier and less troublesome villages. The Church itself regards the small rural parishes as training or 'stepping-stone parishes', as a monsignor from the Curia once described them to me. But even as such, they are unpopular, and the Archbishop often has difficulty finding priests willing to take charge of them. Farrug, for example, has had six parish priests since 1953. The lack of continuity of Church leadership in these small, divided villages has tended to weaken its influence there and to foster a lack of respect for its authority.

In this social climate the anti-clericalism of the Labour Party fits without great difficulty. Labour supporters have already had experience as festa partisans in ignoring the commands of the Church, and in enduring the taunts and disapproval of their rivals in the other partit. For them anti-clericalism is nothing new, and they are thus not as vulnerable to public opinion and the sanctions of the Church as persons in villages which do not have this tradition of opposition to the Church.

But if there is a certain similarity between the anti-clerical behaviour of many festa enthusiasts and that of MLP supporters, most persons make a distinction between the two. The anti-clerical actions of the festa partiti are usually directed against particular clerics in connection with specific decisions. In contrast, the anti-clericalism of the Labour Party is directed at the Archbishop in particular and often at all priests in general. This difference stems from the fact that basically their challenge to the authority of the Church differs significantly. Where the festa partisan does

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not rationalize the distinction he makes between the person and the office of the cleric he attacks, though his behaviour shows that he does make one, the Labour supporter often proclaims that he makes such a distinction, when in fact he does not. The MLP not only challenges the statements of the Archbishop which apply to the political scene, but often questions his right to make them. This explains the difference in the reaction of the Church to the two forms of anti-clericalism.

I have suggested that the one prepares the way for the other. The rebellious atmosphere created by the disputes between the festa partiti is, I believe, as important a factor as occupational class in explaining the relatively high degree of open support the Labour Party has in the southern villages. The extent of this support, especially in the smaller villages, in spite of the sanctions of the Church, came as a surprise to some of the leaders of the MLP, who had always thought of them as dominated by their parish priests, like the small villages in Gozo. But in the spring of 1961, the small villages of Kirkop, Dingli and Gudja were placed first, second and third in an MLP competition to find the community which had the greatest proportion of new Party members. I suggest that the support for the MLP in these three villages is due not so much to their proportion of industrial labourers, which in any case is not particularly high (23, 20 and 35 per cent respectively),[1] as to their strong tradition of rebellion against the authority of the Church. Kirkop and Gudja both have active festa partiti of long standing, and while Dingli has no festa partiti now, the village has a long history of opposition to its parish priests. For example, shortly after the First World War, the Dingli Social Club had an argument with the parish priest, and for many years after, members celebrated the national feast on 8 September, instead of the patronal feast of the Assumption, simply to annoy him.

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But whatever complex and diverse reasons people have for taking sides, the division has given rise to conflict in most villages. In this respect Kortin is no different, as the slogans displayed during the battle of the blackboards indicated. The division has cut right

[1] *1957 Census: Report on Economic Activities*, pp. 41–2.

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178 578 621 across the village and the clubs, and has brought about conflict within many families. People lament the change that has come over the village as a result. An old bachelor friend often used to complain that had we come to live there just a few years ago, 'before politics came and spoiled everything', we would have found the village a far happier place. Picnics and outings were more frequent then, and groups of friends used to gather on hot summer evenings and stroll outside the village to play guitars and sing the lilting Maltese *ghana* in the cool air away from the houses. [575] [796] There was also more life in the clubs. Both the Social Club and the Band Club used to take part in the national carnival competition for the best decorated carts and costumed companies. But as the political conflict has divided the island's carnival celebration in two, so it has also affected the clubs. They now celebrate neither the government's carnival nor that of the MLP for fear the question of which one to participate in would provoke a fight that would cripple the club.

578 665 793 794 Dun Bert, the parish priest in Kortin, is of course the head of the local group which supports the Archbishop and opposes the MLP. His chief lieutenants in the fight are the local clergy and the lay leaders of the religious associations. Pawlu and Anton, his two faithful helpers, are also vocal partisans, as is old Manwel. Dr. Farrugia, old Manwel's son, as a former member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and a leading member of one of the political parties opposed to the MLP, also belongs to the pro-Church division in the village, though he takes little part in its day-to-day affairs. 275 578 665 794 The main activity and support comes from the leaders of the lay associations, especially of the Young Christian Workers, the MUSEUM and the Sodality of Our Lady. These all meet regularly in their respective premises. Many of the others, older men, spend much of their free time in Kelinu's café. These include old Manwel, Pawlu, Anton, the sacristan, the organist, and Dun Mikiel and Dun Filip, respectively the chaplains of the female and male sections of Catholic Action. This café, located right next to Dr. Farrugia's house, is the nicest café on the square, or in the village for that matter. It is the only one which the clergy, the teachers and occasionally Dr. Farrugia himself, frequent. It is thus the headquarters of the more influential village citizens who support the Archbishop. [517] Most MLP supporters have stopped going to it, although a few still play cards there for an hour or so in the late afternoon when they return from work.

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Many of them have stopped going there. In point of fact, Sur Gorg and the secretary are strongly opposed to the Labour Party, though many of the younger men and some of the most active older members support it. A number of people living nearby have complained that members praise Mintoff in loud voices. There is growing pressure on Sur Gorg to ban all political conversation there. He has so far resisted the pressure, for he believes that if he were to give in, he would drive away the very members who form the backbone of the club. His chief problem, as he described it to me, is how to focus the attention of the members on something other than politics. He is therefore doing his best to obtain the permits necessary to open the theatre for which they have been planning and saving for years. He feels that in the excitement of building, the members will forget their political differences and reunite, and thus the club will pass safely through this crisis. But the permits have been slow in coming and meanwhile the pressure on him is building up. Two important members of the committee have already resigned, 'under the influence of those busy-bodies in Kelinu's', as some members described it.

The men in charge of the St. Martin Band Club in Farrug face much the same problem. As has already been noted, most of the leaders of the two political blocs in the village are members of the St. Martin club, and several of them are on its committee. This difference of political loyalty often provokes quarrels over matters of policy. During the centenary, for example, the committee were sharply divided over whether to salute the Archbishop with the customary barrage of fireworks when he entered the village to take part in the ceremony. The matter was put to a vote, and the MLP faction won. The disgruntled losers began talking about firing off their own salute of welcome. But the crisis that this action would have brought about was avoided when the Vicar-General officiated in place of the Archbishop, who was indisposed. As the MLP supporters had nothing against him, he received the full barrage of aerial bombs and fire crackers. The rift was thus healed, and all joined in to celebrate a rousing feast.

The following year the festa again brought a crisis with it. This time it was a far more serious one. Most of the young Labour supporters, in retaliation for the way the Church had attacked their party and its leaders, flatly refused to have anything to do with the feast. These young men included virtually all the partit's

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fireworkers, and without their expert help it was feared that the feast would be a miserable failure. Many Labour supporters also instructed their parents and wives not to contribute money to the feast. This depressing state of affairs continued for some time.

Then one day, about three months before the festa, Pietru, the young schoolteacher who is head of Catholic Action and treasurer of the St. Martin club, came up to me looking very pleased. He said that the feast was saved. Several events had combined to work up interest in it. It seems that most of the people had attended a large and very successful titular festa in a neighbouring village; the St. Roque fireworkers had shot off three extremely well-made test rockets; and he himself had played his tape recording of the St. Martin hymn, the anthem of the partit, over a loud-speaker in the square. These events revived interest in the festa and in the reputation of the partit. Immediately afterwards the secretary of the club, a Labour supporter who has set politics aside for the honour of the partit, called a committee meeting to discuss the problem of making fireworks. After several speeches urging members to keep their politics from spoiling the feast, the committee voted to make fireworks. Though two skilled fireworkers crossed the floor and agreed to help, none of the many experts among the rank and file followed suit. But soon after this political loyalty again began to smother the rekindled partit spirit, and one of the fireworkers all but dropped out. Moreover, Pietru, who is the village's most eloquent and outspoken enemy of the Labour Party, began to preach so vehemently to those he calls the 'lost sheep' of the club, that he antagonized many. His fund-raising suffered as a result.

About a month after this I met Toni at a festa in a neighbouring village, and we had a long talk away from the interested eyes and ears of Farrug. Toni has been a member of the St. Martin Club committee for nearly twenty years, and until some months ago had been vice president. He was clearly very worried about the club. People were already beginning to draw parallels between the present situation and the events that led up to the split in 1930. He said he was doing his best to discourage such talk, and had now begun working hard to avoid an open break.

He pointed out that he had experienced many crises in the partit and favoured a less blunt approach to winning back the interest of the MLP members than did the crusading Pietru. He felt that he

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578 621 665 had already had some success wooing members back on a personal basis by talking only of the honour of the partit and leaving politics out altogether. He stressed that the main problem was not so much the feast but the survival of the club. 'If we can just weather out the storm until after the election we can save it.' He went on to describe how it had taken years to heal the division after the seceding Strickland supporters had rejoined in 1935. 'We must avoid a split at all costs, and the only way we can do that is to bury our political differences.' His technique for doing this was to have as few formal committee meetings as possible, to avoid discussing controversial subjects and to vote in secret, for in these times 'an open vote divides the members'.

578 621 794 796 The wise counsel and efforts of the older members, who have set politics aside, has so far kept the younger hot-heads from splitting the club. In spite of all the obstacles in its way, the feast of St. Martin turned out to be a good show. Though many supporters did not contribute, others gave more than usual and there were enough funds for a good feast. About a dozen boys worked under the direction of the two adult fireworkers, and made most of the fireworks. They gave a very good account of themselves, though not one of them is old enough (18) to join the club as a formal member. All are Catholic Action members. In fact, except for a few St. Roque boys, they are the only ones left in the society. The Catholic Action group once numbered almost fifty. The others, the sons of Labour families, had been forced out by the vote of loyalty to the Archbishop which the association's national headquarters had demanded. But their enthusiasm could not quite make up for their youth or their lack of numbers. During the Friday demonstration for the saint some outsiders who were supporters of the guest band had to help them carry the statue of their patron part of the way. This was a great comedown from the previous year, when his followers were so numerous that they had to struggle for a turn to carry him. But the noise and the gay atmosphere of the celebration rekindled the interest of a number of the Labour supporters. Several helped to erect the decorations on Saturday; a few even joined in one of the band matches.

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It is of course an open question how much longer the intense partit spirit can survive in the face of the political division now cutting across all festa partiti. In Farrug the division between the festa partiti, such a strong force in the past, is now of less importance as a principle of social organization than the rivalry between the supporters and opponents of the MLP. The relative importance in Farrug, as everywhere, of this latter division is directly related to the intensity of the conflict at the national level between the MLP and the Church. If it decreases, so will that at the village level. But the longer it lasts, the more difficult it will be to remove it completely from the social scene. Both the Church and the Labour Party, through their respective societies, committees and social clubs, are building up an institutional framework that is incorporating this political opposition on a permanent basis in all villages. This is taking place in much the same way as the confraternities and social clubs a hundred years ago made permanent the conflict between rival factions competing over the celebration of saints.

The rivalry between the Church and the MLP, as well as that between competing political parties, reflects the increasing involvement of the villager in the political life of his country. It was perhaps only due to Malta's peculiar position as a colony and an island fortress, a role which effectively prevented the development of an active internal political life of the more conventional kind, that competition over church privileges and saints was able to assume the importance it has. It is not surprising that the changing nature of Malta's strategic and constitutional position should alter the tempo and character of its internal political life. In the villages, this change is reflected in the weakening of the festa partiti by national political issues.

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557 662 666 does not rest easily until he has repaid it. This is as true of corporate groups such as the band clubs as it is of individuals. Frequently the financial circumstances of the client, or the very nature of the favour, make it difficult or impossible for him to meet his obligation. His vote, and those of his family, provide the logical and accepted means to this end. This extends the relationship between patron and client to include that between politician and constituent.

66 Candidates who do not have the professional qualifications or high status necessary to recruit a following in this way are at a disadvantage. This is especially true for many of the Labour Party candidates, whose education and social standing at times compare unfavourably with those of their rivals. It was principally to overcome this handicap that the Labour Party sought to strengthen the party at the expense of individual candidates. It did this by limiting the system of political patronage which prevailed under previous governments and curbing the influence of the canvassers. In fact, the MLP officially forbade its candidates to employ canvassers. (Though, of course, many candidates have informal canvassers in their friends, relatives and clients.) At the same time, the party directed its propaganda at building up the image of the party and its leader. Labour supporters were constantly urged to vote for the party and not for individuals. By and large its campaign has been most successful. Its sympathizers not only vote for candidates who do not conform to the traditional image of the professional patron-politician, but they also vote across class lines, i.e. the teacher voting for an ex-dockyard fitter.

578 621 665 666 All candidates have to take into account the parochial rivalries which often cut across their districts. This is particularly true of the rivalry between the festa partiti. It has been noted that there is often a political polarity between festa partiti in the same village, and that sometimes the rivalry is so strong that partisans vote against a political party simply because a leading member of the rival partit is a candidate for it. But the number of people who place loyalty to their festa partit before support of a political party is declining. Nonetheless, if parochial rivalry no longer determines which party will get the votes, it very often decides which of the candidates within the party will. Many people have assured me that it is almost unheard of for a member of a festa partit to vote for a member of the rival partit, even though both support the

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same political party. Thus a politician who is also a leading member of a festa partit always asks a rival candidate from his party to come to his village and canvass the party votes from the opposite festa partit.

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Most people believe that politicians trade promises to assist festa partiti in return for votes. One well-known Labour politician who is the leader of the secondary festa partit in his own village, made such a promise to gain the support of a neighbouring secondary partit that was facing eviction. In return for the votes of the partit, he offered to introduce a bill into the Legislative Assembly which would prevent landlords from evicting band clubs. The proposition appealed to the partit and the bill, which [671] gained a great deal of support for the Labour Party from other clubs as well, became law.[1] In fact, it was one of the first laws the MLP enacted after it was returned to office in 1955. Partly as a result of his promise of assistance, but also because of his keen interest in the problems of secondary festa partiti, this candidate became so identified with this neighbouring partit that he had to ask MLP candidates from the other side of the electoral district to bid for the Labour votes of the members of the opposite partit. He naturally asked them to canvass the Labour votes of the titular partit in his own village as well.

But perhaps the most famous case of this kind, and certainly the most conspicuous, took place in Gozo. For many years the supporters of the Leone partit in Rabat had been embarrassed by the fact that the statue of their beloved patron could not be taken in processions from the cathedral. There was simply no way for her to pass through the walls of the old citadel in which the cathedral was situated. The members of the partit wished to remedy this by breaching the wall and making a large gate, but the Antiquities Board strongly opposed the idea. Finally, an ambitious MLP candidate came to their rescue. He is alleged to have promised them help if they voted for him. Whether the deal for votes is true I do not know. I do know, however, that the politician was elected and succeeded in having a huge new gate torn in the historic citadel. That he did this at public expense, against the orders of his [626] Ministers and in defiance of the Antiquities Board, is evidence of his ingenuity and single-mindedness. Of course, it might also have

[1] Act V, 1955: 'An Act to Amend the Reletting of Urban Property (Regulation) Ordinance.'

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been due to the amount of pressure that the partit brought to bear on him.

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But popularity, close contact with the electorate and the support of his party and festa partit are not always enough to assure the success of a candidate. In order to understand why this is so, it is necessary to examine the electoral process. The system of voting which has been used in Malta since 1921 is proportional representation with the single transferable vote. The country is divided into ten electoral districts, each of which returns five representatives to the Legislative Assembly. The districts are based on population density, and each averages about 15,000 registered voters. A candidate need not be resident in a district in order to stand for election there, and he can stand in two districts at the same time. If he is successful in both, he relinquishes one seat, which is then filled by a member of his party chosen in a by-election. At the polling booth each voter is given a ballot paper listing all the candidates standing in the district, and is required to rank them by placing a number against the name of each, to indicate the order of preference. After the polling is finished, all the ballot boxes from a district are opened simultaneously and the ballot papers mixed. The votes are then counted. As each paper is opened, a single vote is credited to the candidate to whom the voter has given first preference. This is the first count. A candidate is declared elected if he receives a certain proportion of the total number of votes cast.[1] After the first count the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated, and his votes are redistributed in accordance with the second preferences. The votes are then retotalled for the second count. The candidate with the lowest number of votes is again eliminated, and his votes are redistributed for the third count. The elimination of candidates and the redistribution of their votes continues until five candidates receive the required quota of votes.

Few candidates are elected on the first count, for the first preferences of the voters are generally distributed among a large number. First preferences reflect the popularity of a candidate and the size of his following, but the secondary votes he receives are

[1] This quota, the Droop quota, is one plus the total number of votes cast, divided by the number of seats (5) plus one.

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would therefore seem that as this need becomes more pronounced, and as the Maltese voter gains in sophistication, there will be increasing pressure to change the present system of voting to one which strengthens the national government rather than weakens it.

VI

In addition to personal kin ties, patrons, political parties and politicians, pressure groups provide yet another way by which the villager can influence authorities outside his community. By bringing interest groups from one village into contact with similar groups in other villages, they permit united action for the resolution of common problems. The band clubs and football clubs have active national associations. Village lay apostolate societies have their own national bodies as well as the Diocesan Coordinating Junta, a powerful body which has now become one of the strongest forces opposed to the MLP. In view of the important part it and the other Church societies played in defeating the Labour Party in the recent election, they will probably be able to provide a channel of contact with the Ministers and anti-Labour MLA's. Some have already begun to apply pressure to obtain playgrounds and public conveniences for their respective villages.

Even the festa partiti have their associations. The Association of Secondary Feasts works to obtain new Church privileges for its members. It is opposed by the Association of Titular Feasts, which has formally advised the Archbishop that if he grants privileges to the secondary partiti, its members will stop celebrating the titular feasts.

Finally, there are also a number of trade unions. Though most have no village level organization or representatives, and play no direct part in village politics, some, in particular the General Workers Union and the Gozo Agricultural Co-operative Society, a large proportion of whose members live in the villages, play an important part in national politics. They thus provide another channel through which persons at the village level can influence decisions at the national level.

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even try to remove him from office. But they do not attack the office itself. In contrast, a revolution aims at changing not only the office-holder, but also the nature of the office and the social order in which it functions. Though the Malta Labour Party has strongly criticized the Archbishop and the clergy, often in insulting language, for their refusal to endorse its integration scheme, and, later, its demands for independence, it has never suggested that the office of archbishop should be abolished or the Church suppressed. The Church, however, attacks Mintoff as though he were bent on overthrowing the established social order in general, and the Catholic Church in particular. The extremely severe sanctions that it has directed against the MLP and its leaders reflect this point of view.

There is a very real danger that this strong medicine may kill the patient, for there is evidence that the MLP's anti-clericalism is in fact becoming anti-Catholicism, and the rebellion a revolt against the Church. Some of the more extreme, educated Labour supporters are showing a growing interest in the ideologies of countries which have fought successful battles against the Church. Though the great majority of the Labour supporters would still like to be devout Catholics, a small but increasing number are beginning to question the social order. As one remarked to me, 'I'm regarded as a Communist by my neighbours and the Church, which denies me its sacraments. Have I anything to lose by becoming one?' Though Communist literature rarely finds its way into Malta, since it is illegal to send it in the mails, a number of persons have begun to listen regularly to Radio Moscow. A few are even discussing the possibility of joining another church.

IV

But in spite of this bitter conflict, Maltese villages are still tightly united communities, life goes on and the social order does not disintegrate. Considering everything, there has been relatively little open violence between the supporters of the Church and the Labour Party. If occasionally there was some, it was most often caused by or directed against outsiders, either those who married into the villages, or who were imported for some special occasion from other villages. The battle between the Gozitans and the Maltese Labour supporters was an extreme case of this kind. But

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there have been remarkably few of the overtly hostile attacks, common when festa partiti are registering disagreement. What accounts for the qualitative difference in the violence between the groups involved in these two types of conflict? What prevents the national political conflict from degenerating into widespread violence, from destroying normal relations, thus making shambles of the social order? Is it merely the presence of a large, efficient police force?

In point of fact, there are many institutions and ties that operate to exert pressure on the opponents to reach a settlement, and so prevent the dispute from destroying the social system. The most important of the factors that inhibit the spread of conflict is the existence of persons whose loyalties are divided between the conflicting sides. Such persons have a vested interest in the maintenance of peace and limitation of the area of conflict.[1]

The considerable difference between the disputes of festa partiti with the Church, and the conflict between the Church and the Labour Party, has been stressed. The disputes involving festa partiti are localized, their course is highly formalized, there are acknowledged peace-makers: they are clearly rebellions in the sense that Gluckman uses. These disputes are also tightly circumscribed by customary safeguards which keep them from spreading and channel them through set stages until they have been resolved. It is patterned action which, in spite of its occasional violence, does not threaten the position of the Church. In contrast, the conflict between the MLP and the Church is not localized, it is not circumscribed by a body of custom which keeps it from spreading, and there are no acknowledged peace-makers who can mediate between the disputants. Not only is it inherent, it is irresoluble. There is an air of revolt about it and if it were allowed to run to the violence of some of the clashes between festa partiti and the Church, it could throw the country into civil war. The violence of the festa partiti does not threaten the social order, that between supporters of the Church and the MLP would.

What keeps the conflict from becoming more violent are the thousands of persons who have their allegiances divided between the Church and the Labour Party. All these people work to keep the conflict from spreading, if not actually to make peace. Who are they? They are the countless persons whose families have been

[1] *Ibid., passim.*

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divided by the conflict, the office-holders who have laid politics aside to preserve the unity of the clubs for which they are responsible, the many who have sought to avoid open commitments to either side, and to remain in contact with both. They are the people who, in spite of all that has been preached and said against them by both sides, still look to both the Archbishop and Mintoff as their leaders, the one in the religious sphere, the other in the political. They see nothing inconsistent in hanging pictures of the two side by side in their houses. All have a vested interest in peace; and all work in their own way to keep the conflict from spreading and destroying completely their customary way of life.

At one time the entire civil service worked to prevent the spread of conflict in much the same way. When the Labour Party took over the government many civil servants, forced by the nature of their office to carry out the orders of the party in power, were obliged to administer policies which were contrary to the declared interests of the Church. Their loyalties were thus often divided between the two. Some of the higher civil servants carried messages between the two sides. Others called at the Curia merely to assure the Church that they implemented unwillingly the controversial policies. Yet others acted quietly in their own various ways to reduce the tension between government and Church that made their own positions so uncomfortable. Civil servants at all levels thus worked to keep the Church and the Labour Government in touch with each other and exerted considerable pressure to prevent the relations between the two from deteriorating even more. But their conciliatory influence came to an end when the Labour Party resigned. It is not surprising, therefore, that with the removal of this bridge between the MLP and the Church, the conflict became more intense almost immediately.

The two sides are now linked together only by the many persons with conflicting allegiances. Yet their ability to keep the conflict from spreading is slowly being reduced by the uncompromising position of the Church which is forcing them to take sides openly. As these persons reluctantly do so, the important cross links that tie the two combatants together are snapped off one by one, and the conflict becomes progressively more intense.

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578 665 795 What of the future? It would seem likely that the present conflict will continue. The dispute between the Church and the Labour Party has become institutionalized in many villages through their respective associations and social clubs. The major political activity at the village level will thus most likely continue to be a reflection of that at the national level. It will be a dispute between those who wish to preserve the identity of the village as a parish, with the dependence upon the Church that it implies, and the secular elements who wish to establish the village as a political unit apart from the Church. But there will also be other conflicting groups, such as the festa partiti, which will continue to manipulate this political division to their own advantage. The leader of one of the secondary festa partiti indicated to me how this may take place. He was discussing the recent attempts of the Association of Secondary Feasts to increase the scale of its members' feasts, and concluded by remarking, 'If the Archbishop doesn't increase our feast this year, ninety per cent of the club will vote for Mintoff in the coming election.' Thus in the future, as in the past, the Church will continue to be one of the central actors in the drama of Maltese village politics.

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Appendix A

Festa and Band Club Partiti

	Titular Feast	*Band Club*	*Secondary Feast*	*Band Club*
A. FESTA AND BAND CLUB RIVALRY				
GHAXAQ	The Assumption	'St. Mary'	St. Joseph	'St. Joseph'
GUDJA[1]	O/L of the Rosary	'La Stella'	O/L of Consolation	'O/L of Consolation'
KIRKOP	St. Leonard	'St. Leonard'	St. Joseph	'St. Joseph'
LUQA	St. Andrew	'St. Andrew'	O/L of Consolation	'Union'
MQABBA	The Assumption	'King George V'	O/L of the Lily	'Lily'
QRENDI	The Assumption	'St. Mary'	O/L of Lourdes	'Lourdes'
RABAT	St. Paul	'Count Roger'	St. Joseph[2] (Franciscans)	'L'Isle Adam'
VITTORIOSA	St. Lawrence	'Duke of Edinburgh'	St. Dominic[2] (Dominicans)	'Prince of Wales'
ŻEBBUĠ	St. Philip	'St. Philip' 'St. Philip's Festivities and Social Club'	St. Joseph	'De Rohan'
ŻURRIEQ	St. Catherine	'St. Catherine'	O/L of Mount Carmel	'Queen Victoria'
B. INTER PARISH AND BAND CLUB RIVALRY				
QORMI	St. George	'St. George'	St. Sebastian	'Pinto'
RABAT, GOZO	The Assumption	'Leone'	St. George	'La Stella'
SLIEMA	Stella Maris	'Stella Maris'	Sacred Heart	'Sliema'
VALLETTA	St. Paul	'La Vallette'	St. Dominic[2] (Dominicans)	'King's Own'

[1] Both saints are secondary; the titular is the Assumption of Our Lady.
[2] The devotion is centred on a church in the parish that is run by regular clergy. The rivalry is thus classified midway between A and B.
[3] Though this is the main feast, the titular of the parish is Our Lady of Porto Salvo.

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2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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C. BAND CLUB RIVALRY ONLY

BIRKIRKARA	St. Helen	'St. Helen'	X	'Duke of Connaught'
HAMRUN	St. Gajetan	'St. Gajetan'	X	'St. Joseph'
MELLIEHA	Nativity of Our Lady	'La Vittoria'	X	'Imperial'
ŻABBAR[1]	O/L of Grace	'Maria M. Gratiae'	(St. Michael)	'St. Michael'
ŻEJTUN	St. Catherine	'Beland'	X	'Żejtun'

D. FESTA RIVALRY EXISTED FORMERLY

BALZAN	The Annunciation	'St. Gabriel'	St. Valentine	X
DINGLI	The Assumption	X	National Feast on September 8	'Dingli Club'[2]
GHARGHUR	St. Bartholomew	'St. Bartholomew'[2]	St. Joseph	X
LIJA	Transfiguration of Our Lord	'Pius X'	St. Aloysius	X
NAXXAR	Nativity of Our Lady	'Peace'	O/L of Doctrine	X
SAPI	The Conversion of St. Paul	'St. Paul'[2]	O/L of the Rosary	X
SIĠĠIEWI	St. Nicholas	'St. Nicholas'	St. Joseph	X

[1] The external feast of the secondary saint was suppressed.
[2] Social and festa club without a band.

361 Map 3, showing density of population by localities for 1957, closely reflects the built-up area pattern. Broadly-speaking it resembles Map 4 (residence of Dockyard workers) but here the emphasis on Valletta and Sliema, and all the northern part of the Urban zone, is notably less.

THE VILLAGE

● 621 [361] Maltese rural society is essentially composed of village communities each occupying a compact settlement[8]. There are some three dozen villages in the rural area of the Islands[9] among which there is considerable variation in site, date of foundation, morphology, population (B/561) and economic structure (B/381), but throughout the Islands there is a uniformity of function within the village as a community group. This makes it possible to speak of "the Maltese Village" from the point of view of social structure, and allows a qualifying classification into types on the basis of the features mentioned.

17 Maltese society as a whole, and particularly the rural part of it, is to some extent cut off from outside influences by virtue of the insular position of the country, cultural as well as geographical. Yet the Islands have clearly at no time in their history been independent of Europe to the north, Africa to the south and Asia to the east. Quite patently the opposite has been the case and Malta, as ever the mute pawn of great powers, has absorbed its material and moral culture from abroad just as it has received additions to its population whether coming as traders, invaders, or settlers, for four thousand years. But the Islands have put their own stamp on these arrivals so that a discussion such as this must take account of both autochthonous developments within the Islands, as well as those of wider origin.

17 621 The elements within the traditional Maltese village were, briefly, the Roman Catholic Church and clergy, the landed class, and the mass of the population - an illiterate peasantry. 'Traditional' here refers to rural society as it existed in Malta one, two or three centuries ago.

This is not to say that the traditional has been erased from the present scene but rather that recent moves towards literacy, emancipation and communication, and a greater range of amenities within the Islands, have diversified and modified the traditional aspects to produce a variety of different types in place of the social uniformity of the past. But the traditional nucleus within the village, the Parish Priest and the Parish Church retain their pivotal role. The modification of this role is very apparent but the place of the Church has been affected far less in the country districts

[793] [795]

of Malta and Gozo than in the towns, where dockyard developments and other industrialization have produced a new kind of social environment. This is an important subject in itself but, for the present, attention is to be confined to the rural districts where change has to date been slower than in the towns but where the same factors are appearing now along with the rapid 'urbanization' of the villages.

In traditional Malta the function of the clergy[10] extended far beyond matters of religion. The priests were the teachers, doctors, and legal advisors as well as spiritual guardians of the people. Government-organized education began in the nineteenth century. Previously such formal education as there was had been under ecclesiastical auspices. The clergy were literate when almost all the rest of the population was not. This concentration of learning produced a situation in which only the clergy were able to step forward to take the lead among Maltese, for the nobility, which might have been expected to provide a focus and leadership, tended to be more Italian or Spanish than Maltese. Even revolutionary leaders came from the ranks of the clergy; the Mannarino Revolt against the Order of St. John (1775) and the rising against the French during the brief occupation of the Islands by Napoleon (1798-1800) are instances.

For some centuries before the arrival of the British in 1800, the Church had built up its dominating position in both village and town. Even the educated townsman going to the University came strongly under the influence of the Church, for the University, itself a Jesuit foundation of long standing, was and still is best known for its Theology. However, during the nineteenth century, the major changes within the Church of Malta were connected with purely administrative details of keeping pace with the rapidly rising population[1].

Many new parishes were created in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth. The Archbishopric of Malta was established in 1831 with the separation from the jurisdiction of Palermo, and the Bishopric of Gozo was founded in 1863. A movement of great sociological importance during the present century has been the growth of the Lay Apostolate in the Islands, especially in the urban areas. This represents a counter-attack against the forces which are today tending to detract from the traditional omnipotence of the Church. It is only a matter of time before the problems which the Church is facing in the towns will loom much larger than at present in the country districts and in Gozo[11].

565 The landed classes in Malta and particularly the nobility have never taken any considerable part in the communal life of the villages in which they maintain their country seats and draw rents from the lands which they own. They have always [793] been more urban than rural and more European than Maltese. A squirearchy on the English pattern has been lacking, and the functions which, in the English village, fell to the squire have, in Malta, come within the wide range of activities of the Parish Priest.

621 795 565 Apart from the clergy[10] and the gentry, the greater part of the population of the traditional village in Malta was made up of the peasantry deriving their livelihood directly or indirectly from the land or in some cases the sea. Within this section of the community homogeneity was the keynote. There was one Church. All the populace were Church members and attended the same services at the same times each day of every [203] week. The Church could therefore be the centre of diffusion of news to the villagers - both relating to farming and to general affairs in and out of the village.

621 565 241 423 [611] [591] Within the village the peasant and his family, patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, worked the few tmien of land held on rent or lease: rarely was much of it owned by the cultivator. The work of the farm and of the household went on as a single unit (Section 2). The two were often located within the same cluster of buildings (Case VI,v. Plan). Clearly some farmers were richer than others, some had more land, some more animals, but accepted stratification within the village went no further than this: there was no middle class between priest and farmer.

628 197 For the peasant, the bounds of his regular experience were the limits of the village. Contact between villages, even where close together, was slight and invariably less than that between the individual village and Valletta. Evidence of this is found in the dialect differences between villages but equally illuminating is the fact that the basic dialect distinction that can be made is that between the Urban area, with its Italianized vocabulary and intonation, and the rural parts of the Islands with their characteristically broader vowels, harsher gutturals and fewer European words and idioms (B/Aquilina,J). Language is but one aspect of rural culture in the Maltese Islands which reveals the essential independence of the village within the traditional rural scene. Village patriotism is expressed in inter-Parish 628 186 rivalry and in a variety of regional reputations, proverbs, [794] and local lore. Thus the shrewdness of the inhabitants of Rabat is revealed by the saying that "A man from Rabat is worth two Jews"[12]. The men of Żebbuġ (Malta) are acknowledged to be merchants par excellence however, while those of Qormi

628 are alleged heavy drinkers[12]. The notion held in Gozo that a
186 man of Nadur claims to be more Maltese than Gozitan is held to point to the settlement of that village from Malta at some comparatively recent date[13].

621 Whatever the differences of size, settlement, economic
793 structure or tradition the functional basis of the Maltese
795 village remains pivoted on the Church and the Parish Priest, and a detailed discussion of the present scene becomes largely an attempt to assess the part now played vis-à-vis the Church by the new features and modifications of the old landscape in the present.

175 Here we may consider the history and growth of a young
361 Maltese village, MGARR, to show how this growing settlement has acquired the essential features common to rural society throughout the Islands (Map 5).

Until the nineteenth century, Malta north of the Victoria Lines had remained without any large settlements, partly on account of the vulnerability of the area to attack from the sea. This is not to say that there was no human activity in
[172] the area before 1800 for there is evidence of a small church in what is now Mġarr as far back as 1500[14]. Evidence, too, of life in other eras is provided by the temple of Bu Hagrat (2,000 B.C.) and the remains of a Roman house near the village.

175 However, in the early part of the nineteenth century,
361 farmers from Mosta began to cultivate the land in what is now
793 the Parish of Mġarr. The account, of the history of one of
795 the families concerned in this settlement, given by Mitchell (B/525), is typical. The numbers involved in the general movement increased as the century advanced until, in 1898, an independent Parish was established. Before 1898, spiritual needs of the farmers were catered for by visiting priests from Żebbuġ, Balzan, Mdina and Mosta itself and the tiny Church of St. Mary was used throughout this period and until 1918. Earlier in the nineteenth century the colonization of Mġarr had been a 'week-day' venture with most farmers returning to their families and homes in Mosta for the week-end and the Sunday Mass. The visiting priests celebrated Sunday morning Mass for those farmers who began to settle in the area per-
175 manently. With the granting of parochial status in 1898, a
346 full-time Parish Priest was appointed who came from Mosta and
[793] settled in the growing village. The first concern was for a new Church and work was begun in 1912, although the population of the village at this time was only 1,067 (B/167-1911).
[463] Significantly, both the master mason and the architect concerned were Mosta men. Building went ahead slowly on the

000 settlements Mġarr has only three (Appendix 4). Other characteristic features of rural Malta absent in Mġarr are the Band Club and the Football Club. The Band Club movement which spread rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of this became the major 'social' centre for men outside the Church itself (B/521). Similarly football has become a focus of extra-church activity in the Islands - more especially in Gozo where the Band Club has had only a limited extension outside the capital, Victoria. In the case of Mġarr one would expect the village to acquire these 'later-stage' features as it develops in size and
● 121 social diversity. The writer holds that at present Mġarr is essentially very close to what has been called the traditional Maltese village. Incidentally also its agricultural bias (Map 2) is less removed from the traditional than is the case in the more urban-influenced villages. It is certainly the most rural Parish of Malta and yet does seem more 'urbanate' in terms of social life than is the case over much of Gozo.

121 184 Having enumerated the essential elements of Maltese village structure as exemplified in Mġarr, a brief comparative study of other villages of the archipelago, many of which are much larger, older and more complex, is indicated. From observation two basic premises have been established:

(i) Despite the regional differentiation customarily made, rural society in the Islands has a basic homogeneity:

(ii) The modern problem of this rural society, the problem of the individual who is now socially out of sympathy with the life of the community which bred him, is common to all the rural community of the Islands.

The final question is therefore whether or not there can be a standard type of working rapprochement between the new and the old.

121 621 Two villages which may be compared with Mġarr in an effort to answer this question are Għarghur, a settlement of very old foundation, predominantly agricultural as is Mġarr and of like size, and Żurrieq, much larger, more urbanate in character, containing certain socio-functional divisions within itself, and also possessing two small satellite villages.

36 Morphologically GHARGHUR (Map 6) and Mġarr have little in common on first inspection. The latter contains many new or recent detached and semi-detached buildings within the regular street pattern previously laid down. Many of the houses are quite modern by prevailing standards and

175 458 511 [464] [184] between the unskilled labourer and the skilled. This dichotomy was a regular feature during the nineteenth century, as in the twentieth, and is to be distinguished from the rise and fall of prosperity and depression which characterized the totality of economic life in Malta. Malta was highly susceptible to events in the Mediterranean basin and in Europe as a whole and was much affected by changes in trading patterns and in strategy, so that the fortunes of the Maltese fluctuated with the alternation of prosperity and depression during the nineteenth century. [731] The sequence of wars, trade booms and slumps, droughts, epidemics and other events which affected the Mediterranean in general was particularly strongly felt in vulnerable Malta (B/556).

175 184 511 178 The major economic developments arising from the growth of the dockyard and the consolidation of the Islands' role have been outlined in Section 1. The various stages in this expansion were reflected in the economic life and the living standards of the Maltese just as the chain of external events made their presence felt. In all this the fortunes of one section of the population, such as the farming community, could at no time stand unaffected by fluctuations within the economy of the Islands as a whole.

175 178 [184] [871] Malta remained sharply divided within itself by class, district and education and the parallel differences of living standards between one section of society and another were continued. But the later decades of the nineteenth century saw, on the social as distinct from the economic plane, the beginnings of general education which, during the present century, was to remove the illiteracy which had for so long prevented the rural classes in Malta and Gozo from having any experience of life and society outside the limits of the village. [184] [369] Improvements in transport and communication within the Islands and the spread of amenities from the Urban area to the villages in the later nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries further tended to remove the veil of isolation which had shrouded the villages of Malta and Gozo and kept them cut off from the social and cultural changes of the towns. [621] Traditionally, each village had been a closely-knit unit under a Parish priest, having little contact with Valletta and perhaps less with the villages in other parts of the Islands (Section 1).

In the later decades of the nineteenth century the forces indicated were beginning to modify the position but it was not until the present century and particularly

159 423 551 [554] [621] The family has occupied the present house for several generations and has acquired the street name as a family nick-name (these nick-names remain the standard, even semi-official, mode of reference though not of address, when the Christian name is used, v.B/376). Gnetu is a prominent member of the community in his part of the village which now includes some non-agricultural workers.

159 829 46 234 His outlook is rather more 'urban' than that of more isolated farmers, such as Case II. His adult son is an active supporter of the local football club and a regular cinema-goer. Gnetu himself is not concerned with such relaxation. He is devoted to his animals and especially to the goats which he will keep "because we have always had them". He takes an interest in farming and, despite his illiteracy, is fully prepared to listen to advice.

159 829 544 234 178 He enters animals in shows at Ghammieri and attended public lectures organized for farmers in 1957 (Section 4). He thought the lectures and a film on dairying technique interesting but gave the usual verdict that Maltese farming suffers from special difficulties of its own which cannot be solved by what he believes are "foreign methods". He observes that "it would be an excellent idea to go to the trouble of washing ones animals regularly but the time and labour thus expended would bring no additional return to the farmer". He believes that the methods which he employs throughout the working of his farm are tried and therefore to be trusted although in more than a few cases some basic cost accounting (as suggested at the lectures) would reveal the patent weaknesses in his argument.

CASE VI : Summary.

159 423 (A goats' and cows' milk producer with a considerable land holding.)

A. Land.

23 tmien of land, mainly dry, comprising 11 plots in 7 parcels arranged in two main blocks, one in the Ghajn Qajjet (Rabat-Dingli Uplands) one in the Blue Clay Basin on slopes of Wied Qlejgha. The former on soils of the l-Iklin Complex, the latter on good, sheltered Carbonate Raw Soils.

[429] All rented from a number of landlords, including the Civil government. Rent estimated at c.£30 p.a.

159 241 B. Utilisation.

The emphasis is on fodder crops.

Crop plan, Feb. 1957.

Plot 1	Potatoes	Plot 7	Sulla
Plot 2	Sulla	Plot 8	Tomatoes, potatoes.
Plot 3	Barley	Plot 9	Tomatoes
Plot 4	Barley	Plot 10	Vines
Plot 5	Vetches	Plot 11	Sulla
Plot 6	Poor grass for bedding and grazing.	Plus wallside fruits and vines in several plots.	

000 can command.

226 There has, however, been material help to fishing in the
463 form of financial assistance[31] and the introduction of a
654 Fishing Equipment Supply Service (H/177 - 1957, Section F,
178 p.1), but the essence of the problem is, as in agriculture, that there is a retreat from fishing by the younger generation.

226 Marsaxlokk is the biggest fishing centre in the Islands
103 while, in Malta itself, Żurrieq - though not a port - comes
621 second by number of resident fishermen. In Gozo most fisher-
361 men live in Victoria and Xewkija, both inland settlements away from the fishing harbours of Marsalforn, Mġarr and Xlendi. Socially this residential distribution is important since only in Marsaxlokk is there a sufficient resident fishing population for one to talk of a 'fishing community'.

361 Marsaxlokk achieved parochial status in 1897 but the
226 village is still without many 'modern' attributes such as cinema, resident doctor, barber and certain shopping facilities for which the fisherman goes to Żejtun. His interest is
[484] primarily the sea and many fishermen visit the 'town' only
[443] for the fish market. In Marsaxlokk itself the fishermen
[512] gather for Church and gossip on Sunday mornings; the rest of their weekly schedule is governed by the weather and the season.

226 As a class the fishermen and their families are economi-
463 cally lower than the farmers. In February, 1958, about
554 10.4% of the estimated 840 fishermen were poor enough to
511 qualify for C.A.R.E. relief (v. Section 3). At the same
162 time only 9% of farmers were entitled to supplies on the same basis, and the average for the total population was lower still at 8.2%.

226 The fisherman is regarded, even by the farmer, as low on
463 the social scale. This, together with the generally
554 depressed standard of living of the fishing community despite
178 the present official financial assistance, is producing exactly the same position as in agriculture. The younger generation is not prepared to accept the industry as it is nor the way of life based on it.